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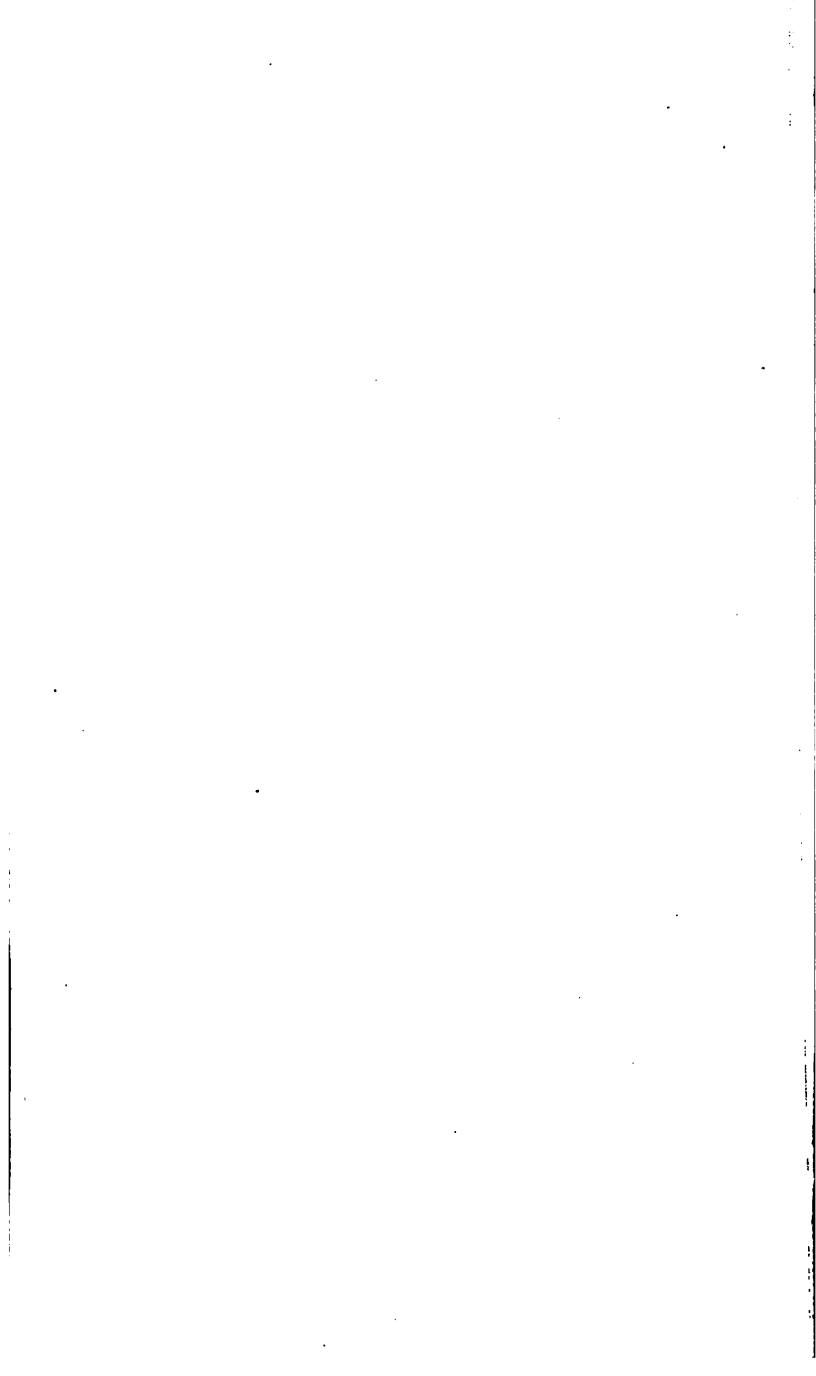
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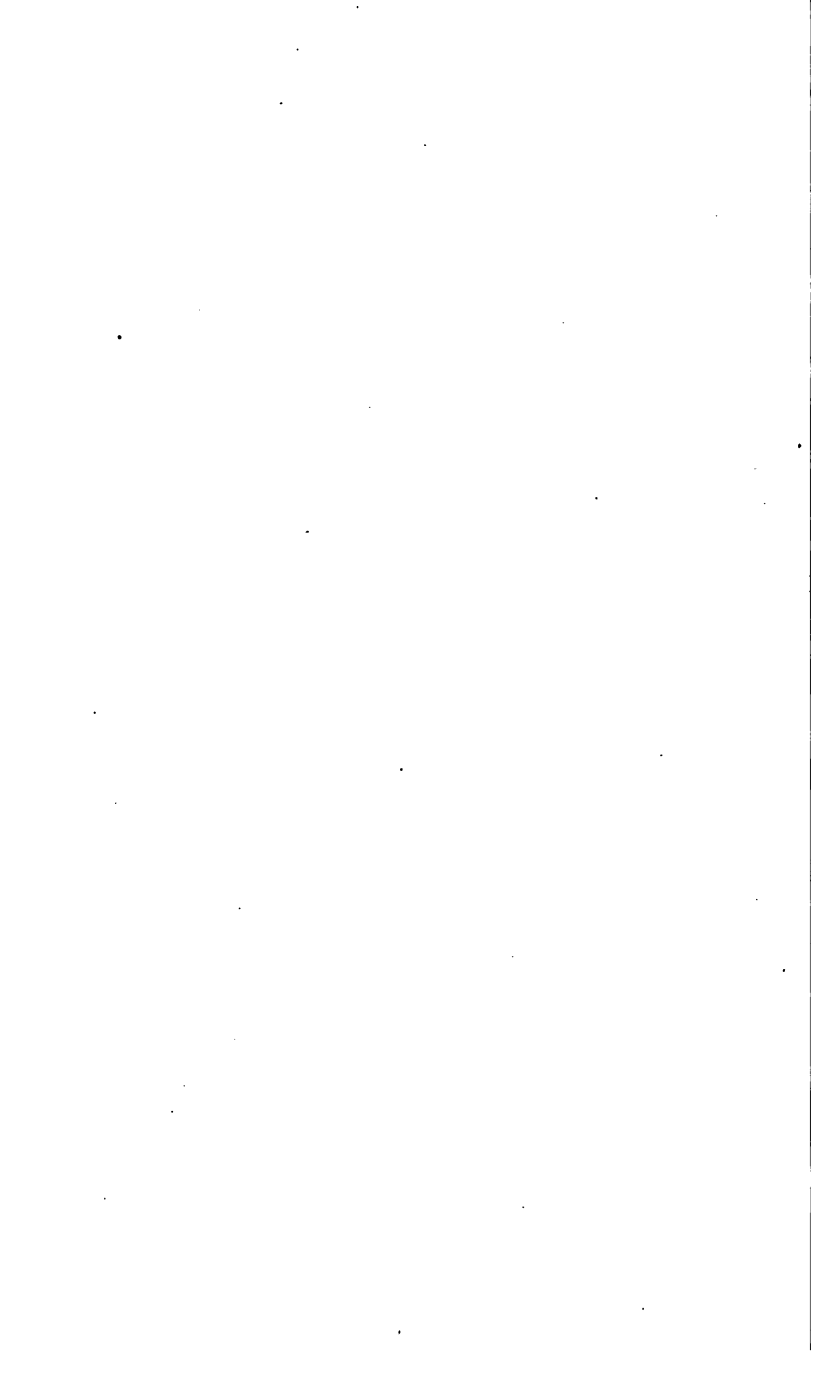
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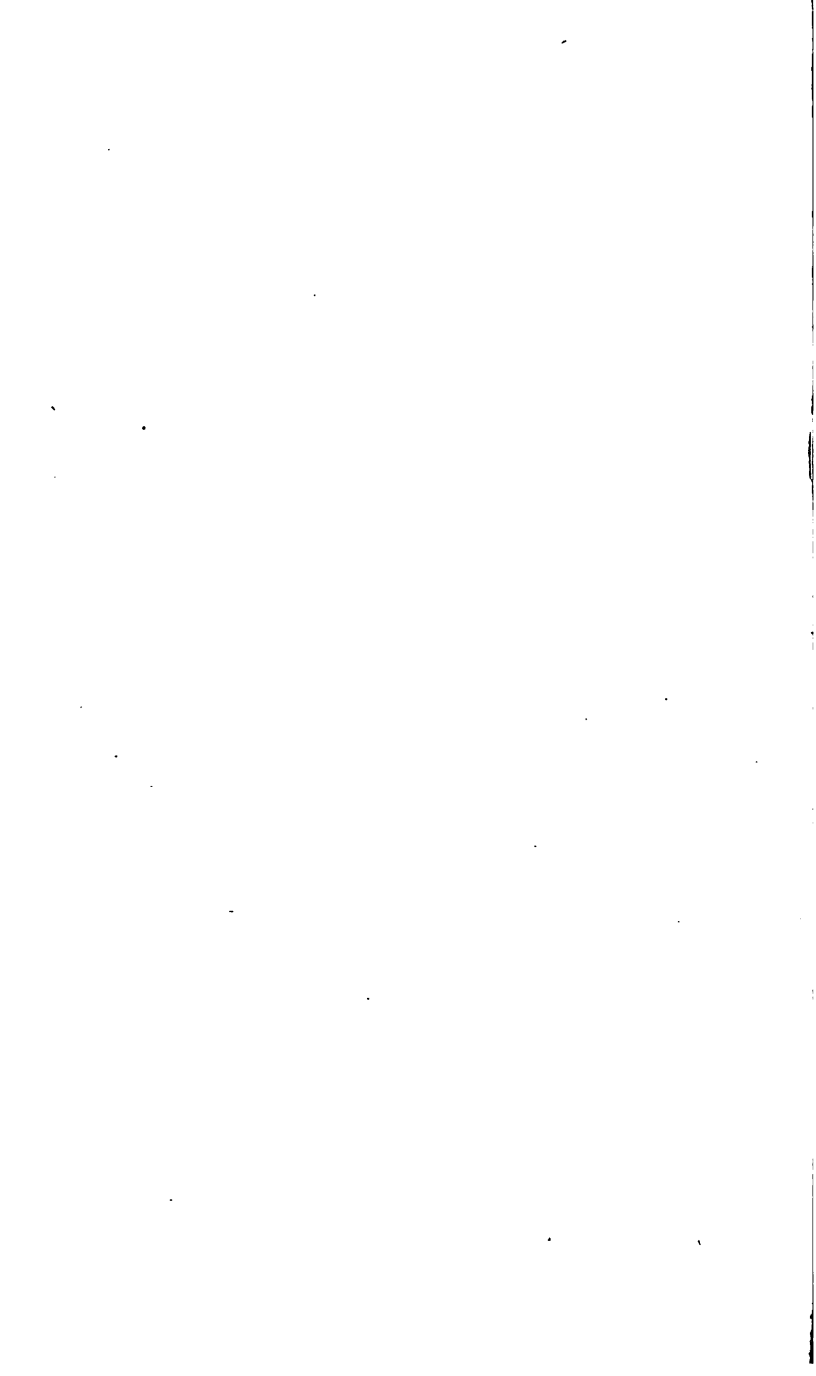


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NIX

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LETTERS FROM HELL.

VOL. II.

LETTERS FROM HELL.

BY

M. ROWEL.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, 8, NEW BURLINGTON STREET;
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9
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Figure 1 consists of four scatter plots arranged in a 2x2 grid. The top-left plot shows 'Number of children' on the y-axis (0 to 10) and 'Number of adults' on the x-axis (0 to 10). The top-right plot shows 'Number of adults' on the y-axis (0 to 10) and 'Number of children' on the x-axis (0 to 10). The bottom-left plot shows 'Number of children' on the y-axis (0 to 10) and 'Number of adults' on the x-axis (0 to 10). The bottom-right plot shows 'Number of adults' on the y-axis (0 to 10) and 'Number of children' on the x-axis (0 to 10). Each plot contains a grid of points representing different combinations of children and adults.

LETTERS FROM HELL.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MY last letter ended with a short description of the theatre in Hell. It has brought the system in which your theatres are managed to my thoughts. It is but very indifferent, always deteriorating, always going backwards.

But is it true that you have begun to act plays in your churches, and to hold divine service in your theatres? It is not incredible! The world is perverted, and will ever be so more and more.

But I have heard that the use of opera glasses has become quite general in churches—that people subscribe to them just as they do to theatres, if they wish to have a seat, is already an old, a very old story—that on these solemn occasions they clamber up anywhere, wherever they

can get, just as in a circus; even up on the pulpit, and the monuments, to say nothing of on each other's backs, so as to be able to see: about hearing, which according to old-fashioned notions was the principal thing, they do not trouble themselves a bit. So that your sole aim is to witness a spectacle in the hallowed places. It is no happy direction, forsooth, your piety has elected to take! You take Heaven by storm, like a modern race of Titans; but it is only a theatre's Heaven!

But, *apropos*, surely you do not applaud and hiss?

On the other hand, the subject appears no less credible. Even in my time the religious element had begun to walk the boards with delicate and mincing steps. I know more than one piece, the idea of which is of a religious character; its external decoration, in a great measure, ecclesiastical. And I know several that are of a purely biblical nature. Of course, the subject of these last is taken from the Old Testament. But, as is well-known, it is but a step from the Old to the New Testament; and that, a step which few can avoid taking, unless they be Jews. I should not, therefore, be surprised to learn that they have introduced pieces in which the Lord and the Twelve Apostles figure. The Revela-

tion of St. John must be able to yield wonderful materials for scenes and tableaux on a grand scale. In the Catholic Church, indeed, they have long since arrived at the extreme limit of all that can be deduced in this direction, seeing that they represent the whole history of the Passion in the grandest dramatical style. Something similar is said to take place here in the so-called City of the Jews. But there of course it is quite a different affair ; it is neither edifying nor amusing. But enough of this for the moment !

If ever it should occur to you to publish these letters—and though they were not written with that object in view, yet on my part I shall offer no objection to your doing so—their authenticity will naturally be stoutly contested, and among other questions, it will be asked :

“ Even if the letters were written in Hell, how could they come from Hell to the world ! ”

How strange people can be ! There is scarcely a single person who has not heard speak of ghosts ; there are numbers who believe in the existence of ghosts. Well then, if there are ghosts, why should there not also be ghost-letters ? And what can be more reasonable than the supposition, that those liberated souls which return to the world should oblig-

ingly undertake to forward them to their destination ?

This is in fact the way in which it is arranged ; all letters go out from here when an opportunity offers ; and, believe me, their number is greater than you might suppose.

As many letters as you have received from me, so many different ghosts have been in your house. Stay ; do not be alarmed ! It is not to every one I entrust my letters : they are all particularly decent ghosts, and if it was not from a feeling of innate aversion you would probably find several of them extremely entertaining. Moreover, they have expressly to engage on no account to annoy you, but to go about their errands quietly and silently. All ghosts are by no means ill-disposed, capricious, and refractory ; there are some very estimable ghosts, to whom one could well entrust the whole world.

You may know, then, that whenever you find a letter from me in the morning that you have had a visit from a ghost during the night. And you will find by experience that it is really of no importance.

Did you not find a letter under your desk a short time ago ? I will tell you how it was. When you laid your pen aside overnight, you, doubtless without thinking, happened to lay it crossways with the pencil. On suddenly per-

ceiving this symbol my messenger became so terrified that he dropped the letter in the spittoon and fled away.

Now I come to think of it, I wish you would do away with those superfluous fowls in your yard. You surely might do us that kindness. In a mortal's ear, a cock-crow may sound very refreshing indeed; but on us immortals, on the other hand, it makes a piercing, ill-omened impression. It is a warning that the dawn is at hand, though it may even yet be distant; and about the last day and the resurrection, which surely will come, though yet it may tarry long.

Excuse my bad writing! They are the most abominable pens they give us; more than half worn out in the service of unrighteousness and of scribbling; and the paper is so thin they will make holes in it. I have only at hand some old false documents, let me see, from the year 853. On closer inspection, I find that it is a collection of Isidore's decrees. I am obliged to use great caution in dividing them, or rather in peeling them into thin films, as fine as moonshine.

And the ink, my friend! Ah, what would you say if I told you it was my own heart's blood? It is black enough, and so much the worse, but, as you see, it is thick and muddy.

I need scarcely remind you that my letters will not bear keeping. They are only the glimmering of a nightly vapour that quickly dissolves in the light and reality of day, and vanish. You must therefore always read them at once, and, if you wish to preserve their contents, copy them.

I am thinking of getting the letter I am now writing conveyed by a very remarkable man, whom I reckon among the most interesting acquaintances I have. He is just bound on an excursion to the world. He is one of Charles the Bold's Paladins, who met his death by a Swiss spear at Murten. Stiff and erect he marches about in full accoutrements; not even the spurs are wanting, though they will ring no longer, nor the helmet plume which no breeze will ever wave again. He always keeps his vizor down, and though I have often had many a good conversation with him, I have never yet got to see his face. He is ashamed of himself, so far as I can make out. Never has he been able to forget that he, the renowned, chivalrous knight, succumbed under the hand of a wretched peasant.

His knightly dignity seldom allows him to associate with any one; and he drags out his dark, monotonous existence in his armour in more than monastic solitude.

It was quite accidental that I came in closer contact with him. I happened on one occasion to be in a public place, where, in my old style, I began to speak in admiration of the splendid wine of Beaune, adding that I had drunk it on the spot. When the others had left, I found myself alone with the man in armour.

"You have been in Burgundy?" he inquired, in a hollow voice.

"Yes, noble sir!"

"And in Beaune, near Dijon?"

Again I answered in the affirmative.

"Côte d'or, lovely, ever to be remembered land!" he muttered in his vizor, and went away with his head bowed and his arms crossed.

Thereupon ended our first interview; but we met frequently afterwards. By degrees he seemed to take a liking to me. He told me many things about Charles the Bold's magnificent court; his grand martial hosts; about the future the proud Burgundian had looked forward to; about battles and tournaments, whence he too had brought away many a trophy. He never alluded to Granson or Murten. I, on the other hand, had to tell him of the present condition and circumstances of the former Duchy of Burgundy; about the power and exploits of the French Empire; about the

recent inventions in the art of warfare, and of the manner in which battles were decided now. He listened to me in sheer amazement.

But I managed to excite his full interest and gain his entire confidence when I happened to give him an account of my sojourn among the Sevens, and the charming heights that branch out from them, bearing the significant title Côte d'or. In my description of these regions, and from my experiences there, I was able to enter into minute particulars. He asked question upon question, but there seemed to be one question which was continually on his lips, but which he could not bring himself to put. At last I happened to allude to the Castle Roux. When I mentioned this name, a shudder passed through him, after which he became perfectly still and listened with breathless attention to my tale.

There was a great deal to say about the Castle Roux ; and when I noticed how deeply his interest was aroused, I was not backward in telling him all I knew. It is an ancient mountain castle, recently restored after its original quaint plan ; and, what is but seldom the case with these old castles, is held in great esteem by its owner, who makes a point of living there a great portion of the year.

The family is very old ; but the original

name Roux has had to give way to another, not unknown in the annals of France.

The old castle, which in itself is a very remarkable structure, is very rich in curiosities. I conducted my listener everywhere with me within the venerable walls, through the labyrinthine corridors, up and down the neck-breaking winding stairs ; from the battlements, whence a good view was to be had over the whole of that lovely, blessed country ; down into the terrible vaults, that were cut out from the solid rock, where no ray of light ever pierced ; through apartments and halls, from the armoury to the Knight's Hall—in short, everywhere.

There was only one place into which I could not take him, namely, into the so-called Red Chamber ; for I had never been able to see it myself. It was locked, and had never been trod by human foot, I was told. Several hundred years ago some terrible scene had been enacted there ; but what it was I could not learn. On the whole, the house-steward who conducted me round seemed very reserved respecting the secret history of the castle, and of the family. Certainly, he told me a good many traditions connected with the castle and its neighbourhood, but none of them were of much importance. What made the memory of

the old place ineffaceable was told me in a little village inn where I passed a couple of nights.

They had nothing definite, however, to tell me about the closed chamber. But there was another story connected with the place which was very remarkable. It was about the so-called "Cold Hand."

It was said that as often as the head of the family had been on the point of undertaking something which would either redound to the injury or ignominy of the house, he felt the pressure of the "Cold Hand" at the critical moment. The same instant he stretched out his hand to bid a welcome, to seize the sword or the pen, an icy cold hand was laid upon his; not, however, always on the hand, but sometimes upon the chin, the neck, or the head. For centuries, down to the present day, the "Cold Hand" has never quitted the family. The last time it was felt was in the time of the late head of the family, when he was first thinking of marrying, at a very youthful age. Just as he was about to lay hold of the pen, and sign the marriage contract, in the Knight's Hall, where the company were assembled, the "Cold Hand" was laid upon his right hand, which was already stretched out in the very act of writing. Terrified, and turning as pale as a corpse, the pen fell from

his hand. The marriage was broken off; neither prayers nor threats could ever induce the intended bridegroom to fulfil the contract. Scandal was busy, and gave rise to all sorts of reports, in addition to the story of the "Cold Hand," which was already well known.

I ended my tale with the remark that in such family traditions one was at liberty to believe just as much or as little as one pleased, and that it was difficult to be able to form any decided opinion about the matter.

But on this point the man in armour did not agree with me. He shook his head, and said, in a hollow tone :

"It is truth, man ; word for word ! I am the Count of Roux, the last of that name ! I am the ' Cold Hand ! ' "

Involuntarily I drew back, so deeply rooted are the instincts we bring with us from the world.

Here, of course, no one is afraid of ghosts ; here all hands are cold.

The Count of Roux sighed, or rather groaned deeply.

"Listen to me," he said ; "I will tell you my history."

"I never could make out clearly why I am

come into the torments of Hell ; it must have been, if such a thing is conceivable, because I was too religious in the world. For I was devoted to the priesthood, heart and soul, and took all its commandments upon me.

“In the valleys of the Sevens, which, with the Côte d’or, issue from the mountains, a colony of Provençals had for centuries taken up their residence. They were a peaceable, intelligent, orderly race, and in a material point of view a real boon to the estate. But they were heretics, and formed a separate religious community by themselves. They were a remnant of the Albigenses, who had been scattered about in these parts, and had immigrated under the title of “Sabot people,” or poor folks from Lyons.

“For a long time they had kept their dissenting views a profound secret, contented if only they could find a refuge and a home. But after a time, when they became more powerful, they allowed their heresies to become more manifest. They maintained, for instance, that the Scriptures in the vernacular tongue should be accessible to every one ; and that it was unnecessary to believe anything but what the Scriptures taught, and what was in accordance with the Apostolic Church. A dangerous doctrine, indeed ! And the time, of course,

must needs come when the priesthood should put forth their whole strength to extirpate and root it out. That critical time arrived in my age. As an obedient son of the Church, I closed my eyes to the destruction I was preparing for myself, and chased the heretics out of my domains without any mercy. It was an Albigensian Crusade in miniature. A third part of my estate, hitherto the most flourishing, henceforth became a very desert. Certainly, nothing else could have made me adhere to my good purpose than the conviction that I was thereby assuring myself a place in the kingdom of Heaven, an opinion in which all the priesthood, from the highest to the lowest, confirmed me.

“However, at a later period I was well nigh repenting it. The Church, for which I had done so much, would in reality do nothing for me. On the contrary, they laid every conceivable impediment in the way to my union with the fair Cyrilla of Breville, whom I had made the object of my affections. As an excuse, they alleged that I was distantly related to her. What difficulties, what humilities, I had to undergo! I besought, I threatened, I lavished money away. My high-born prince interested himself powerfully in my case. I had to go as a pil-

grim to Rome, and at last, after two years of fighting and of tribulation, I led my bride to the altar.

“In truth had I been able to call the ‘Sabot people’ back, I think I should have done so ! But that was impossible.

“So Cyrilla became my wife, and was doubly dear, because she had cost me so much, and had been so true to me. For I had had a rival, apparently a dangerous one, in the Count of Tournailles. There would have been no impediment in the way of a union with him ; but she had preferred to wait, and to wait long, in order to keep her promise to me. For five or six years I was supremely happy ; those were the brightest days of my life. We were blessed with two children, a boy and a girl. There was nothing wanting to complete my happiness.

“At that time Duke Charles called his faithful vassals to arms. With a valiant but bleeding heart I tore myself away and obeyed the summons. With the history of that unhappy war you are of course acquainted. We gained an easy victory over Lorraine, and then set out against the Swiss. Granson, Murten, terrible recollections !

“I do not even now understand how it really happened ; there must have been some hellish trick in it. At Murten I fell, perished in great

distress, and opened my eyes here in torment.

“I, who had so surely relied on coming into the kingdom of Heaven, flung headlong into a corner of Hell, by a peasant’s stalwart fist! The shame, the indignation, can never be overcome.

“And my lovely wife! My infant children! To shame and indignation succeeded a consuming longing. I could find no peace; I must back to the world, cost what it might.

“Thus I began to reappear as a ghost. My first nocturnal wandering on earth is eternally imprinted on my mind. Though the places by which I approached my former home were well and intimately known to me, I felt myself as a perfect stranger, so ill was I at ease. I had a feeling like that which a malefactor must have when bent upon the foul deed by night. The smallest sound terrified me, even though it were but a withered leaf falling to the earth. I could easily have shortened my suffering, and have reached my home in a trice; but it was as if I were compelled to protract my torture by slowly creeping from place to place, and by draining the bitter waters of memory, once so sweet, to the very dregs. At length I emerged from the grove, trembling all over. The castle lay in the bright moonlight close before me.

I hovered about among the shadows. Oh, what a change had taken place in me! I was still the same person, but I knew myself no longer. I could have wept bitterly at that hour. In my lifetime no tear ever came up into my eyes, when I could have wept. But now, after death, I longed so to weep, but could not. I could only shudder and shake. I was as unnerved as if I had been afraid of ghosts; but it was myself that was the ghost, and I had nothing to fear.

“Oh, what a welcome home! The vane on the turret creaked, so that it cut me to the heart; the dogs howled; the cattle became uneasy in their stalls. Was it not my favourite charger that was pawing the ground?

“Thief-like I stole into the castle, and glided through the corridors, from room to room. How empty, how comfortless, it all was!

“I must see my children first. I found them in the sweet slumber of innocence, so fresh, so radiant, beaming with health and strength. The nurse lay in a deep sleep, and was snoring loudly. Never had I felt as I did now. My heart burned with a tenderness that was quite, quite in vain. There they lay before me, my own flesh and blood; but they were mine no longer. I had no part in them. I dared not take them in my arms, and hug them to my

breast; they would have died from terror. I could only sigh and turn hastily away and vanish. Here was a Heaven, but I, their father, was in Hell!

“So I passed along the way I had so often gone to our bed-room with its bridal couch. It is that room which is locked, and which is never entered by any one. I paused at the threshold, overwhelmed by strange feelings. I should see her once more; her!

“I saw her again, resting in another man’s arms; and this man was my former rival, the Count of Tournailles!

“For a moment I was, as it were, paralyzed at the unholy sight. She was lying, beautiful as ever, with her bosom half exposed, in his arms. Oh, nameless agony! I, I to whom she had sworn an eternal fidelity, was not only forgotten, but betrayed. How false, then, was that lovely bosom! Unhappy one, hast thou forgotten thine oaths, or is it thus that thou honourest my memory?

“In impotent fury I clenched my hands, and set my chattering teeth together. What could I do? At least I would awaken her. I extended my arm farther and farther over the bed, and laid my hand upon her naked shoulder. She started up at the icy touch; she saw me—I must have been a terrible

sight—and then, uttering a wailing cry, swooned away.

“My indignation knew no bounds. From that hour I persecuted her wherever she went. When she least expected it, she had to feel my cold hand. But she never saw me again; and this I think made my presence all the more terrible. It was especially at night that I watched her; never again did she find any rest in his arms. My cold hand lay between them. Day by day they became paler and wasted away; at last they could endure it no longer, and mutually agreed to separate. She went into a convent. Thenceforth I had to leave her in peace. In the convent she gave birth to a son, who became the founder of the new family at the Castle Roux.

“My own children died. That was the last great sorrow I had in the world above. But it changed my heart as it were; I felt a sort of contrition. Perhaps I had been too severe with her. A dead man is no man, and has no longer any claims. She, however, was a young woman in whom the warmth of life still glowed; nature and the world had still their claims upon her. I subjected myself to a kind of penance. I swore a solemn oath that I would watch over Cyrilla’s son by her new marriage and over his posterity throughout all time.

“From that time dates the ‘Cold Hand’ in the Castle Roux. I have an infallible feeling when any one of the family is about to take any disastrous step, or form any calamitous determination. So I have no longer any peace in Hell, but must wander back to the world. And at the critical moment I interfere. With but few exceptions every head of the house in this family, man or woman, has felt the ‘Cold Hand’ one or more times, and thus it will continue till the family exists no more.

“Even now I feel myself summoned again in my heart; in a little while I must return once more to earth. What is happening I do not know; but I know my time, and the ‘Cold Hand’ will never fail in its errand.”

Thus ended the Count of Roux, and sank into a deep reverie, soon after which he left me. But I shall meet him again, and I hope he will be the bearer of the present letter.

You naturally ask, “Shall you not come yourself some time or other? Why do others come, and not you?”

I scarcely know how to answer. Truly, I feel it might be that I paid a flying visit to the world. It depends upon a certain inward necessity. If I felt it, naturally I should have

to go. But it would not be for the best; it would be but an addition to my sufferings, and, therefore, I shudder at the thought. I do not know, but I have an idea that the Devil has his hand in it. God certainly mixes up in nothing here.

If one, however, has got a *permission* from Hell, the whole world lies open to him. But that, in reality, would only mean, "that a place of torment, number two, has been found." It is a fearful thought, is it not? It brings all the anguish of death back to my heart.

No, now I hope to be confined to Hell to fulfil my sufferings in a natural way.

Say now, if you dare, that one cannot hope in Hell!

CHAPTER XIX.

THE evening is the enjoyable part of the day in Italy. But as my mother was not fond of walking, Lili and I mostly used to go out alone. Venice, Firenze, Naples, enchanting reminiscences! Ah! understand me aright, I do not mean now, but when I was in the world.

These evenings were indescribably lovely and enjoyable. Nature was at peace, and however restless the day may have been, there was peace, too, in the heart. For I walked with Lili by my side, and though in the middle of the throng I was alone with her. And all around us was so wonderfully beautiful. Poetry can discover naught more enchanting than I experienced in those evening hours. Yes, it was full reality, though to the end of my life it seemed more like a dream or a fairy life, surrounded by a brilliancy and a perfume which belonged not to the world. And, let me add, it seems so still.

But it was from the lovely evenings in Firenze that I derived the purest, the most

spiritual, and, therefore, the most perfect enjoyment. First we visited "Piazza del Granduca," the central point of public life in the town. Surrounded by magnificent old buildings, built on a large and noble scale, paved and brilliantly lighted up, it resembles a noble saloon of enormous dimensions. The sky was so dark that it looked like a fixed covering arching over with its countless brilliant stars. And it was so sheltered, and yet so cool, that neither wind nor scorching sun could ever penetrate there.

Here, straight before one, the ancient palace, with its lofty mediæval tower, rears itself up into the sky. It has looked down on the crowded masses in the times of the free republic, on Dante, Michael Angelo, and the martyr Savonarola. Just outside it are two colossal statues, the one representing David; the other Hercules. On one side, and a little in the background, the noble fountain with Neptune, Tritons, and Fauns, on the very spot where, according to the story, Savonarola once suffered death at the stake. Close by it is the equestrian statue of Comus of Medici, a master-work by Giambologna. On the opposite side, the old pilastered hall, bearing the name of Loggia dei Lanzi, and raised some steps above the level, may be seen. The ascent is guarded by two

antique lions. Here, by the light of lamps, are exposed to public view some of the choicest works of art Italy possesses: Perseus the Deliverer, by the great master Benvenuto Cellini; Judith and Holofernes; Hercules and the Centaur; the famous marble group, by Giambologna, named the Rape of the Sabine Women; and the hero Ajax, supporting the dying Patroclus in his arms. In the background a row of antique priestesses, in size larger than life.

There is something magical, something inspiring, in these sublime works in the artificial light. And it produces a peculiarly happy impression to know that these works of art, which are exposed to public view, and which are accessible to all at any time, are, as it were, entrusted to the innate regard for the beautiful and the grand of the great multitude for their safe custody.

Oh! fool that I am! Am I not writing a kind of æsthetical narrative? And from Hell! Do not laugh, my friend; I cannot laugh with you. So great is the power memory exerts over me. I am running away every moment, though I can never run away from myself. These reminiscences are my life, my all! Still they are not as a pitcher from which one may drink a draught of intoxication; but a

goblet whence one quaffs poison, a poison, though, that is not deadly, but only produces unspeakable torture.

Bear with me ! I will see that I keep my flighty imagination in better check for the future.

We wandered about from one to the other, now and then exchanging a few hasty words, with a calm, peaceful joy, for which the world has no name, elevated by a feeling that hovered on the borders of reality and enchantment. And when we had thus feasted on them for a while, we would turn into the faintly lighted arcades that wind through the noble Palazzo degli Uffizii. Here we would converse again in our usual confidential manner. The enchantment was over ; but we were full of its effects. We had so much to tell one another. Yes, how confidential and earnest ! Her arm rested on mine so closely and confidingly ; there was an expression of affection in her whole being that enchanted me. Her slightest movement did not escape my notice ; it seemed as if I could hear her heart beat. And how sweet it was to lead her to understand what she had seen, and to awaken new feelings in her pure young heart.

And when it grew late we would return over the open space by the Cathedral.

Here all was still, and not so brightly illuminated but that the moonlight could assert its supremacy. Maria del Fiore is this church's name; and truly it deserves it. Florence signifies the flowering; but the cathedral is the flower, at all events the heart's flower, of Florence's glory. It took a hundred and fifty years in growing up from the earth, but then it appeared in a size and splendour hitherto unknown. Its dome not only commands the whole of the town, but of the entire valley.

Close by, the graceful bell-tower, ornamented with costly sculpture, rears itself up to a height of nearly three hundred feet. Not far distant is the ancient baptistry, with its three wondrous bronze doors, of one of which Michael Angelo remarked, that it was fitting to be one of the gates of Paradise. Outside it is a rough hewn stone bench. Here Lili often used to rest herself when wearied with her long but enjoyable walk. It was the same bench whereon Dante had so often sat, sunk in a deep reverie about Paradise and Hell, and about Beatrice.

One evening I asked, "Which place do you like best, Lili?"

"It is lovely, indescribably lovely in the Piazza," she replied, "but it is but a strange, a heathenish grandeur. Here, however, Chris-

tian-like thoughts come in, and I feel myself at home."

"Then you like yourself best here?"

"Yes, there is remarkable difference between here and there. I have a lively feeling that how ever far one may travel in the world, to Christ we must ever return. The world, with all its splendour, has naught to give compared with what He can give us."

"Oh! that I were a Christian like you are, Lili!" I broke out involuntarily. And, without knowing it, I pressed her hand, which lay in mine, so hard that it must have given her pain.

She kept back a cry of anguish, and looked up in my face with an astonished and disturbed air.

"Otto!" she said seriously, "I have nothing to say against your humbling yourself. But do not humiliate me by such a remark! I am but a poor child to you."

"Yes, Lili; that is just why you feel with a child-like heart. Is it not an old and sacred truth, 'Out of the mouth of babes shall truth be heard?' My Lili, will you answer me a question? Perhaps it will be easy for you to answer that which is and has been an enigma to millions:

What is it to be a Christian?

A pause ensued; Lili remained standing

in thought. At last she raised her head and said :

“Dear Otto, what else should to be a Christian mean, than to have Christ abiding in one’s heart?”

It pierced me to the heart. How often had I felt that I had a Devil within me, or at least a demon !

“Yes, thus it is; and in none other way. So simple, and yet so grand!” continued Lili, in a quiet transport : “He is my aim ; out of Him I cannot speak of myself. He is my being, from Him I think, feel, and act. He is my life, in Him I move, live, and have my being.”

And she added, in a low tone, “Oh, Thou my Saviour, grant that I may ever know Thee thus to my life’s end !”

We walked on farther in silence. I felt myself inwardly bowed down, and yet at the same time exalted, by the side of this child. In form she was a woman, full-grown, lovely, enchantingly graceful. But in thoughts, aspiration, and in sympathy, she was still the gentle, innocent child. And strange ! sensual as I was, much as I regarded her loveliness, it was still chiefly the child in her that made me a prisoner and governed me.

My own childish reminiscences streamed in upon me ; my heart became full, so unutter-

ably full. The tears were nigh welling up into my eyes. One thought at last prevailed —“She is the angel that shall lead you back to God!”

“But,” interrupted Lili, after a long silence, “it is peculiarly something which can alone be felt, and not expressed. Do not you think so too, Otto?”

I had great difficulty in answering. What I did say I do not know.

Her arm trembled in mine; by a sudden impulse we stood still beneath a little image of the Virgin, faintly illumined by the lamp above.

“I must look you in the face,” she said, “it was exactly as if a stranger had spoken to me. No, it is you still; you are the same as ever!”

And she laughed at herself, and at her silly fears, as she called them.

Her laughter, which always sounded like music in my ear, broke the enchantment between us. Her glance, and the brilliancy of her countenance, went to my soul.

“And you are too the same as ever,” I exclaimed, as I drew her close to me; “my own, my only Lili; in life and in death, my own sweet, good little friend!”

I have met her again; yes, I have met Anna! She was sitting by herself, engaged in a strange occupation. She was picking the

reeds, and the shells, and other small particles, out of her dress, and from her long, luxuriant hair. Her light garment had slipped down over her shoulder. Oh, horror! I was near enough to see a brand mark on the white shoulder. It was red as blood, and like a guilty deed it reverted on my soul.

I could, as it were, read her heart. Shame, remorse, and despair, harboured there. But there was naught of her life's history to be read in her heart; that was written in her degraded, but once so beauteous, features; and the brand on her shoulder ended the history. From the first, she had been guilty of none other crime than of a warm, earnest affectionateness. In return for this, I had thrust her down to destruction, without bestowing another thought upon her. She had sunk down from misery to misery, from crime to crime, till she had found a death of despair beneath the waters. Oh! how my heart burned and glowed.

I regarded her a long while in peace; I could not get rid of that glance from her eyes! I felt as if I were laid out on the rack; aye, worse, as if I were stretched on the stake and wheel. But all at once a shudder ran through me; I became as hot as a firebrand, and as cold as a lump of ice. A terrible idea had seized

me. Who did these features remind me of? There was no longer room for doubt. Was it not a striking likeness? Martin was as like Anna as a son can be to his mother! And if any confirmation were needed, had not Martin's mother belonged to a wretched circus troupe, and had they not found her body in the pool? And Martin's secret, that great secret, that was to clear everything up between us! Oh! how could I doubt any longer?

Martin, then, was my and her son!

I had not only proved her ruin, but that of my own child as well. Now it was plain why I had felt myself so inexplicably attracted towards the boy; why I had believed that I found myself over again in him; why I had loved him spite of all his depraved and defiant manner.

His depravity! Let me be just. It was nothing but my own depravity; he learned everything of me. Certainly, there was an unfortunate, if not an evil nature in him; but this, too, was mine. God had punished me in him.

Is it not said that "God visits the sins of the parents upon the children to the third and fourth generation?"

It is horrible! But the most horrible of all is this—not the mother only, but the child, too, my own child!

There is no such thing as sanity here in Hell, consequently there can be no insanity; or else I had gone mad in that terrible hour.

I must ascertain the truth, cost what it might. I started forward in the foolish hope of being able to surprise her, and of getting my question answered before she could escape me; but at my first movement she was startled, and noticed me: with the speed of terror she rushed away, and soon vanished from my sight among a crowd of shades she met on the road.

Confounded, in despair, and suffering the severest agony, I returned on my steps:

"Whither shall I go, where shall I hide myself," I muttered to myself in wailing accents? But in Hell there is no hiding-place, neither from man nor from God; there is no corner where one can fight out the struggle in solitude, and give way to one's grief unheeded.

I do not think I have ever yet succeeded in getting any single letter written off at one time. The paper lies before me, I write a little about what especially occupies my thoughts, and then lay it aside till another opportunity occurs, which often is long in coming. I am naturally referring to an inward opportunity. If I did not seize the occa-

sion as it were by force, I should never have a quiet moment here for writing; and so, although I call these communications letters, the greatest part of them are in fact only notes.

I was at my country seat. One morning, the gardener came to speak with me respecting some alterations to be made in the garden. I was not in the best humour possible; rather out of temper in fact, that lovely morning; and so when the man, who I thought had got ample instructions, came out rather reluctantly with the question:

“And the tree, your honour? Do you intend that that pretty tree is to be cut down?”

“Yes, certainly,” I answered shortly.

The conversation referred to a large beech tree, which stood in the corner of an inclosed field, belonging to me. How ever it had come to stand there all by itself, no one was able to explain. But it certainly was one of the most lovely trees of the sort one could well wish to see. It spread out its branches on all sides in regular form, and the foliage, which was most luxuriant, hung down gracefully. But it obstructed the view, and sentence, therefore, was pronounced against it—to cut it down, and chop it up into faggots!

"Yes, certainly," I answered.

But the man remained standing; he evidently had something still on his mind. After a little hesitation he continued, in a half-disheartened, half-bold manner :

"But old Severin will take it so to heart if this tree is felled. He is so fond of it."

"Who is old Severin?"

"He is a very old man, and lives in the house close against it. He must be near upon a hundred, I think. He keeps his bed nearly the whole year round. But in summer time, when it is a nice warm day, he manages to get up, and then some one leads him underneath the tree. I have seen him there every summer as long as I can remember. People call it old Severin's tree, and would take it very hard, I am sure, if it were to be felled."

Unfortunately there was something in the man's voice and manner that did not please me; something that sounded like a threat, and injured his cause. I had not the honour of old Severin's acquaintance, and did not care to form it in this way. However, the tree would doubtless have been spared had not the fellow added just at the critical moment :

"Then does not your honour think that we may leave the tree standing?"

There was something very irritating in this

remark, especially in the word "we." I had no idea of being coupled in the plural number with this fellow off the dung-heap.

"No matter who the tree is called after, it is my property, and shall be cut down. Let me hear no more talk about it."

And the tree was felled, and I got the view, but it did not realize my expectations. The house ought to have come down too, but that did really belong to old Severin.

Towards summer old Severin died suddenly. One day they found him in a well of water outside the house. His attendant had scarcely left him an hour, and during this time the accident had occurred. Yes, accident!

Thereon the jury gave their verdict, "Inadvertently drowned." The man was ninety-three years old, and quite childish; so of course any idea of suicide was out of the question.

But the common people thought differently. All kinds of reports got whispered abroad, which made it appear very probable, and were by no means pleasant to hear. They had carefully kept it a secret from the old man that his tree had been cut down, and had tried to persuade him to keep in bed.* Somehow or other, however, he got to hear of it; and from that day never expressed any wish to get up

or to go out into the air. But, besides this, a great change had taken place in him. He became peevish, reserved, and silent. Evidently there was something running in his head, and he was tired and weary of everything. What it was that engrossed his thoughts was discovered when they found him that day drowned in the water.

The occurrence produced a very uncomfortable impression upon me. I was very sorry about it; and, if I were to speak the truth, I was not quite free from remorse. But as for the story connected with the sad event I discarded it altogether as a piece of scandalous gossip. There was no sense in it, that a man of ninety-three years, who suffered neither from want nor pain, could not have abided his time, but should put an end to his days.

And yet—oh, how terribly clear it all is now—yet such was actually the case!

Old Severin had actually committed suicide out of despair about the tree, which no longer existed. The axe that had felled it had struck the old man to the heart. Certainly, he was childish; it was half insanity when he threw himself into the well. But still his mind was firmly and indelibly impressed with one idea, that there was no pleasure any longer for him in life, nothing in the world worth living for.

His wife was dead ; all his friends were gone ; and those of his children that were alive were far off. He lived among an entirely new and strange generation. There was nothing left to him saving that old tree. It is true it was much younger than he was ; he was already getting an old man when it became a favourite and well-known tree, renowned for its refreshing shade. But they had lived together a long and happy time ; it could never be forgotten. And still, though so rich in old associations, it was at its prime and full vigour. It was the old man's summer joy ; beneath its cool shade he had often refreshed himself in the hot sultry days. The tree existed no more. Henceforth life was winter to him. He would not, he could not live any longer.

It is a true history !

Certainly, I did not know all this when I had the tree cut down ; but at all events I knew enough to have let it remain standing. My quick, hasty temper had carried me away in an unhappy moment.

It was dear firewood that I burnt in my stove that winter. Even now it makes Hell hot for me. But old Severin sits as of yore in the cool shade.

Has not the thought struck you that here is

a new edition of the history of the rich and the poor man?

“Now he is comforted, but thou art tormented!”

Oh, would it only were a history, to remind, to warn! Foolish wish! It is the most complete reality.

But if you think this is all, you are very much mistaken. In my day I have felled many and many a tree besides this beech. Not from malice (the world was right when it called me a good-hearted fellow), but from sheer obstinacy, wantonness, and levity. When anything came in my way, of course it had to be removed at once, and I went on in my path without bestowing a farther thought on it.

In this respect I am a type of the human race in general. How much harm men commit; how many sorrows and pains they cause each other, without really meaning anything wrong, by a thoughtless and heedless behaviour!

Very likely you have often seen a conceited coxcomb saunter along the road, and with his light cane cut the heads off the flowers that happened to catch his eye. He does not do it, it must be allowed, from any bad feeling; in fact he neither thinks nor feels anything at all about it. But these poor flowers, that thus stand in his way, enjoy the

life that has been vouchsafed them too, and cause pleasure to numberless persons along that same road.

You do not take it amiss of me? You are free to say that I am such a coxcomb. I have certainly been one. But after this concession I may be at the liberty of declaring that the world is full of such thoughtless, selfish coxcombs, of both sexes. They set a great estimation on pleasure certainly, that is to say, on their own pleasure; but they treat the pleasure of other people in the most heedless, giddy way. Would you like to know, in one word, wherein the fault, the great fault lies? It lies, then, in the want of self-denial. This virtue, the groundwork of all the other virtues, only One can teach the souls of men, namely, He who denied Himself unto death upon the cross.

But the great mass will never learn self-denial. Woe to him who does not separate himself from the great mass! He makes the trees and the flowers droop wheresoever he comes, and thinks nothing of it; but some day it will all come back to his memory, with terrible accusations, with burning remorse and torment. These are but small items in the register of sin, it is true; but, unless a saving hand interposes, these small things will be his

destruction, even though he be not conscious of having committed any sin.

Oh, my friend, take heed whilst it is day !
The night cometh !

My mother certainly was a remarkable woman ; or rather, I may say, a very remarkable woman. I do not believe she ever gave me a cross word. But she had a cold manner about her in gaining her point ; and, in most respects, she did with me exactly as she pleased. This balancing of disposition, this imperturbable *sang-froid*, I did not inherit from her.

I do not believe that in her whole life she ever drew the shortest straw. She never committed herself ; she was always right, always stood with the palm of victory in her hand. There was a degree of irresistible logic, less in her words than in her person and deportment, which reflected what was right and becoming in every direction. Conscious herself of the universal estimation in which her perfections were regarded, they fell with a crushing weight on every one who ventured to oppose her. And this was more evident in her relations with my father ; I might say my poor father. Sometimes he certainly did get his own way, but, as long as he lived, he never was once allowed to be in the right.

As for my aunt, it was but natural that my

mother felt a sort of compassion for her. It would have been difficult to have found a more decided counterpart to my mother. But this compassion was never accompanied by any treatment at all derogatory; so that as regards her my mother was blameless, and had nothing to reproach herself with. In fine, if my mother was not what may be called kind, she was never unkind to any one.

People in general were of opinion that there was some secret or other which was the cause of the peculiar relations existing between my parents. I do not think there was any. But they had certainly been egregiously mistaken in each other. They were two irreconcilable quantities, that, if they must live together, could not get on in any other way than they did.

On Sundays I used to have to dine with my mother, a compulsory duty that was very disagreeable to me. But still worse was it when every now and then I had to accompany her to church. It cost me a great effort. Not that I had anything against God's word; but a restlessness came over me that was extremely painful, and so many things were ripped up that I would much rather had remained buried for ever. In my every-day life it

was not difficult to keep serious thoughts away ; but on these particular Sundays it was impossible. Something that lay hid in the deepest corners of my soul powerfully asserted its sway in connection with all kinds of affecting reminiscences. I felt that I was not what I ought to have been. But now, yes, now unfortunately it could not be different.

But the worst of all was that I could not refuse occasionally to accompany my mother to the altar. She used to go regularly twice a year, in the spring and autumn. It was just as if I was going to my death ; but I could not, I would not offend or vex her. So I went with her, but with great aversion and horror ; for I was no atheist, neither was I careless to that degree that I was above such a thing. I felt at bottom that I ought not to participate in that holy rite without bringing my heart with me. Whatever might be laid to my charge, at all events I was no hypocrite. I was honest and candid even in my greatest dissipations. Yet, I must not say too much.

But my mother would take me with her with an iron hand. Pale and exhausted I walked along by her side. She thought, perhaps, that it was from pious emotion ; not so, it was from other, but as deep causes.

The confession caused me insufferable pain.

I tried all in my power not to follow the words; but, on these occasions, the spirit was stronger than the flesh, and I comprehended their meaning but too well. I had to turn the host over and over again in my mouth; my tongue appeared to grow thicker and thicker. Involuntarily I thought, "Will you succeed in getting it down?" Truly it was anguish to heart and soul. If I was pale before, now I turned red. I managed easier with the wine; it was liquid at all events, but it was just as if it burnt my inside. In general it took me a long time to recover the effects of these days. I was obliged to throw myself into a whirl of dissipation and gaiety to stupefy myself, to put myself to rights, as I called it.

So it was then. But now, my friend, now I feel that even if it had been to save my mother's life, I would not have gone to the altar. I lost more, oh, a thousand times more, by those communions than she gained by them.

One of these sorrowful communions returns with especial force to my mind. And when I ask myself, "Why this one in particular?" there stands a graceful girlish form before me, in the first bloom of youth, I may say, of a spiritual loveliness that is inwardly moving.

She is standing with her head slightly

bent forwards, her dark glossy hair falls down over her neck, breast, and shoulders, in luxuriant masses. Her features, which are small, and of a delicate mould, have about them a charm of a higher nature than appears even in her perfect figure. When she raises her dark glance, it is her eye alone that attracts the attention; in that deep and thoughtful gaze the whole of her being streams forth. Nay, not quite the whole, for a smile belongs to that glance, a smile of passing sweetness, which it is so easy to evoke in her. But whether she smiles with her eye or lip, one cannot say, it is like a light from above, that falls down upon and illuminates her features.

You have here a faint picture of Lili in her sixteenth year. She, too, was going to the table, and she, too, seemed uneasy in her mind, inwardly moved. She is paler than usual, and her bosom is heaving from her irregular breathing, sometimes so deep, so infinitely deep. Yes! she, too, is restless, and moved, but in a manner, and from causes, as widely different from those which agitate me as heaven is from earth.

I had arisen early. I placed a great value on my morning dreams, but to-day they had fled away from me. A cold, severe reality had at once appeared before me. Uneasily

I went from one thing to another, without their being able to engross my attention even for a moment. My disquiet increased; with all my power of will I could not prevent my heart from throbbing. When I looked in the glass, I had to turn hastily away. What criminal was it that was staring at me? For, in truth, there was not only something strange, but at the same time something terrible, in those pale features which I called mine.

At last the hour was at hand. I got ready and went in to my mother. I met Lili alone in the parlour. She, too, seemed agitated.

"Are you not well, Lili? You look pale," I said, as I took hold of her extended hand.

She smiled. Oh, that smile was my heaven! Yet, woe is me that I had none other! Now, I have not even that! And she left the room to tell my mother that I had come.

I fell into a reverie. The emotion which she had plainly evinced took possession of my heart. There was nothing that presented greater attractions to me than to solve the enigma of her nature. And, at this moment, it was a fortunate diversion to see into her heart instead of into my own.

My eyes fell upon a little book she had just been reading. Here, then, was the solution of

the riddle. It was a Companion to the Altar. I read where the book was open.

“In the Lord’s supper, the Saviour enters into a communion with the believing soul, so inward and full, that no tongue can describe it. The type of this blessed union is the relationship between the bridegroom and his bride. It is far from being merely a comparison. Jesus is the true bridegroom, and the pious soul the bride. In infinite love, unspeakably deep and sweet, they devote themselves to each other, and find the fulness of blessedness in a complete, eternal union.”

Now I understood, or at least got an idea, of what was passing in Lili’s mind ; what it was that moved her so inwardly.

Her soul was agitated like a bride’s when the moment was approaching, when she shall give herself up, and belong to her chosen bridegroom. Never before has she experienced so sweet a feeling ; never before has she felt so happy, and yet her soul is filled with tremulous emotions. She longs, she earnestly craves, to give herself up to him, and feels tempted as it were to fly. She blushes, she turns pale, a prey to shame and fear, though she feels well assured, that when she rests in her husband’s arms, there will never more be cause to fear.

CHAPTER XX.

THE other day I found one of my friends, a distinguished Danish artist, sitting in a great state of grief, with his hand under his chin. He had a paper in his hand.

He was what the world would call a truly good and amiable individual. Why, then, had he come to Hell?

He had been an idolater to his profession. He loved it so passionately, that in it he had forgotten his God, righteousness, judgment, and life eternal. He was a noble-hearted soul after his way, as the manner in which he passed out of the world evinces. His country, entangled in a web of falsehood, treachery, and violence, had been compelled to take up arms against an audacious enemy of superior strength. Boldly the little nation rose up to guard all that was precious to it, its fatherland, its native tongue, the beloved memories of a thousand years; aye, it was a battle for existence itself.

But bravery cannot work miracles now-a-

days. Betrayed, deserted on all sides, though the whole world felt itself moved at such shameless, such cowardly violence, the little nation had to succumb.

In admiration with its exploits, the enemy overflowed the land in the arrogance of victorious joy. My friend, the sculptor, was one of the many who had vainly sacrificed their lives in a righteous and holy cause. At the first summons, he had thrown aside the chisel to seize the rifle, and had met his death, without having realized the value of life.

"What have you got there? Why are you so sad?" I inquired.

"I mourn over my poor, unhappy country, that lies bleeding ignominiously in the dust under the feet of the enemy. I am afraid that my country was not worthy of the life I sacrificed for it. We were, indeed, grievously mistaken, not only in the righteousness and compassionateness of the world, but in ourselves too. We were by no means the powerful, valiant people we had imagined ourselves to be; a people who, nursed up by the achievement of great and noble deeds, placed their fatherland before aught else. I bitterly repent ever having thrown away my young life in this manner. It was a mere illusion, a dream from which I have been fearfully awakened."

“Do not let yourself be carried too far, my friend, you only add to your misery,” I remonstrated, interrupting him. “The Danes are certainly known to be a brave, valiant people.”

“Yes, the Danish soldier is not to blame. He is brave and staunch ; as hard as iron and as firm as granite. Though taken away from the plough, badly disciplined, badly equipped and commanded, and in want of competent officers, he performed his duty to the utmost. But never have good qualities like these been worse appreciated or worse utilized ; never has a good soldier been worse led, than was the case in this unhappy war. A false spirit pervaded the whole affair ; beginning from above, it constantly extended itself downwards. For a length of time it was unintelligible how so much bravery in warriors, such great sacrifices on the part of the people, should be fruitless. But it is all clear now. There was a mighty influence that made itself secretly felt, to which everything else had to give way. Not only before us, but in our very midst, we had a German element of superior power. This foreign element had crept in unnoticed in the lapse of time, and had hatched its brood in our nest, to appear at some time or other under adverse circumstances.

Now it boldly raises its head, encouraged by the mishaps of our fatherland, and drags the confiding, disheartened people along with it, aye, and patriotic hearts too, by thousands. This is the source of all my country's woe. Denmark was mentally vanquished long before she had physically to succumb."

"Truly a very sad history!" I said, sympathizing with him.

"Yes, very sorrowful indeed, and widely extended as it is, it may be comprehended in a few words:

"'The little Danish nation rose up like a lion, but fell down like a sheep, aye, as the very silliest sheep.' When the war was over, the opinion began to gain ground that, had the enemy's demands been granted, all these misfortunes would have been avoided. Honour, liberty, national existence, were not included in the question. An effeminate feeling of despair, and a womanly view of the case, kept gaining ground. Indeed, they were not far from swearing that the wolf had done no wrong at all, but that all the blame was on the sheep's side.

"A genuine, narrow-minded egotism, which has an eye only to its own petty affairs, raised up its voice in loud tones, and cried woe over all those who had thought to venture something

for the sake of country, people, and liberty. These loathsome voices, never heard before, reached even to the very throne.

“See here!” he continued, handing me the paper, “here we have, by way of confirmation, an address with numerous signatures affixed.”

I read it. Yes, in truth, it was enough to be sick over. Piteous lamentations over contributions, compulsory driving, billeting, tyrannical oppression! No thought about fatherland, or the common weal. Wild howls against the government that had waged the war for honour, independence, existence, this glorious contest for everything holy and precious. Piteous cries to Majesty, that it should counsel with other advisers and procure peace—peace at any price! Whether the country were dismembered, whether hundreds of thousands of brothers and sisters were given over into the power of the enemy, was a matter of no consideration so long as N. N. could only get to farm his land in peace, or O. O. to carry on his chandlery business; or P. P. to live from his rents, or his insignificant post. Peace, peace! Danish or German; quite indifferent, if peace could only be had!

What could I say? In itself it was entirely devoid of any comfort, and in Hell there is nothing that resembles comfort in the smallest

degree. But in this instance consolation was given, and appeared of itself. As I was thoughtlessly turning the paper over, I saw that there was some reading on the other side. It was a poem, a very beautiful one, the expression of a powerful mind; of one who loved his country best in her misfortunes, and allowed hope to live on.

I was startled. How had these pretty verses come to Hell? Only one explanation was possible. The dedication was published together with the poem; they were in the same relation to each other as are the face and reverse side of a coin. The dedication, then, in accordance with some law of mind unknown to us, had taken the poem with it to Hell, to appear in all its full pitifulness from the contrast.

I read it aloud to him; he was enchanted with it.

“You see now,” I said, “that you were unjust in your complaints. ‘There are broken vessels* in all countries.’ You have still a people whom you may venture to acknowledge. The refuse always floats on the surface, and always seems to be more than it really is.

* From a poem by Vessel, in which he reproves people who come home from abroad, finding everything perfect there and everything faulty at home.

In tranquil and in happy times it keeps nicely to the bottom ; it does not matter a doit. But when an opportunity presents itself it is skimmed off, and thereby the matter is cleared. In plain words, where poems like this are to be found, neither honour nor life are in danger."

He seemed convinced and soothed ; and now we regaled ourselves as well as we could over this shabby dedication. One of my friends set it to music, and it had a wonderfully comic effect as a song. It soon got widely circulated in our circle, and made a brilliant success.

For it is the order of the day here in Hell, that whenever anything extremely contemptible or wretched comes down from the world above, for our composers to set it to music, when it becomes a popular, or rather a street song. But our songs do not consist of this sort alone. We have a superfluity of lewd songs, which come down to us all ready set to music. But it is naturally only the riff-raff of Hell that find any pleasure in them, I had nearly said ; but I mean that scream themselves hoarse in singing them.

Something of a similar nature occurs to me. The other day, in rummaging in the pocket of my coat, I found a large bundle of paper

wrapped up in it. It was an old *Landdag's** newspaper. I had probably stuck it in my pocket as waste paper, and its spectre had thus followed me down to Hell.

This paper contained a portion of the notorious transactions which had been discussed by the *Landdag* for reforming the church in our country. Truly the *Landdag* had set itself an agreeable task. A corporation, composed exclusively for a secular object, and of members professing all kinds of religion, with and without any faith, had undertaken to introduce order into God's kingdom on earth, the Christian Church, a society of a purely spiritual nature! Among the speakers there were three especially that distinguished themselves.

One was a retired director of a fire brigade. The fire-bell was continually tolling in his ears, and he discharged streams of water in lofty jets. The other was a weaver from the country. He found his loom wherever he came, and anything whatsoever he got permission to mix himself up in, he brought to his loom. So matters went on till the thread broke; but no one had ever seen any result to his labours. The third was a mouldy literate, who did not acknowledge any religion

* The *Landdag* is the diet of legislative estates in Denmark.

at all. You must certainly remember him? He it was who, though, as I said, devoid of any religion at all, had undertaken to notice all theological and other works of an edifying nature in the evening paper. Theology was his favourite study now, and truly a very ludicrous one it was.

I cannot tell you how much I—I must use the expression—enjoyed going over these lectures once more, internally so different, and yet of the same extraordinary effect. It is impossible to decide whether it is stupidity that has taken impudence in tow, or whether the reverse is the case. They are all essentially comical; we should laugh if we could.

I believe the literate is the master of all the others; he is in the literal sense of the word a deep fellow, who can contain all the rest put together. He knows to a turn how it should be. After having overhauled the clergy, without allowing them a ha'porth of credit, he attacks the church briskly, and disposes of it in the snap of a finger. This may do all very well for Hell. But it is almost incredible that such a thing can succeed in the world in any assembly of the picked men of the country. Still, it shows how the world really is constituted.

There is no doubt but that these transactions

are to be found among our archives, and that they created no little sensation in their time. But no one remembered them longer. Here, just as in the world, one thing quickly supersedes another. A lucky accident had now placed them privately in my hands.

I was just on the point of going to a large party of good friends and acquaintances, where I delivered the select speeches of those chosen persons, to the great amusement of the company. Some composers who were present undertook to treat them melodramatically. As yet, however, nothing has been done, but the speeches are already widely circulated.

But I must return to that very recent tale of robbery which so strikingly exemplifies the moral position of Europe in the nineteenth century. It appears to have given rise to a regular assortment of street ballad literature in a small way. Allow me to quote some of the first that come to hand of these merry new songs and histories.

Yet, when it comes to the point, it appears that I have promised more than I can well fulfil. One must be particular, even here, and know how to master, or, at all events, to restrain oneself.

There are, first, some proclamations couched in a lofty and bombastic style from powerful

belligerent princes. Oh glorious army! how ever could you forget your *prestige*? If you wished to fight, why not have picked out a foe more worthy of you? "*Famose thaten!*" (The enemy, the least and weakest they have been able to find, had, for instance, been obliged to give way at all points.) The mentally-intoxicated mighty fatherland re-echoes with shouts of joy. But all the rest of the sober world knows not whether to laugh or to cry. A thick scratch over them!

Next, there are some astounding *political conjuring tricks* in a true moral German spirit.

Hocus pocus, backwards and forwards! White becomes black, and is changed to white again, according to circumstances! The whole art depends on the talent of the performer. Meanwhile, the entrance-money is paid, and those who will not applaud must at least swallow their vexation. The next great exhibition will take place when the political horizon is too thick.

A thick mark over these, too!

The next thing to cite:

—— "*Une grande misère.*" There are three, and all of them are made fools of. As they have sown so do they reap.

In piteous chorus they sing together;
"*Schleswig-Holstein ganz verschlungen.*" One

of them, however, has a little consolation, for he gets the money in his pocket. But the others? They get only derision and ineffaceable shame.

All at once a thundering word of command :

“*Halt! Schön-aufgesehen!*” The song ceases, and they stand all in a line. A stout corporal’s cane whizzes about their ears.

That was the end of “*die glorreiche Erhebung.*”

— A pastoral letter composed of the most pious, the sweetest and most venerable expressions, in which a hundred thousand souls, that have been sundered from their people and their fatherland by the violence of the enemy, to sink into a foreign and detested nationality, are ordered to thank Almighty God for their happy deliverance on the occasion of a general and solemn festival of the Church.

(Humbug, blasphemy ; very smart !)

— From another quarter some *extra ministerial speeches*, which begin by making a great and powerful nation believe, that though they have permitted solemn and sacred engagements to fall to the ground ; though they have betrayed their poor, sorely distressed friend, under pretence of making his cause their own ; though they have essentially prostituted themselves by threatening, while

all the time they dared not strike a blow; though they have submitted to blow after blow in the face, and to a degree of scorn that is perfectly revolting, yet for all that that they can stand with palms in their hands, and think that their influence in the council of the nations is greater than ever.

This must suffice !

The melodies are first-rate. The accompaniment of a hand organ "obligato," produces an excellent effect. But such we have to hear; it cannot be described.

Have you heard speak of the gardens of Jericho? If not, at least you have heard of the lilies of the field, that neither toil nor spin, and yet are arrayed more gloriously than Solomon in all his magnificence.

Well, I and Lili have once seen these lilies growing in the valley of Jericho. But Lili was a lily herself, more lovely than all the others. She told me the following legend on that spot one evening. I can still hear the soft melodious voice in which she used to tell her tales, as if they were secrets.

Wherever she got these tales from I never could make out. I have often been inclined to think it was from inspiration. But enough to say that I listened to them with a kind of

devotion, and believed in them—I had nearly said as if they were gospel.

“A man was lying at the point of death. The world was vanishing away from him like a vapour. At last the great question occurred to him, ‘Whither will you go when you have departed hence?’ And with this a restless agitation and anxiety seized him.

“He was at the point of death; in its last great agonies. But around his bed stood ten terrible forms; stiff, cold, implacable. They were the ten commandments of God. And they lifted up their voices against him, one after the other, and vehemently accused him. The first said, ‘Unhappy man, how many gods have you not worshipped in the world, and in your sinful heart?’ Another, ‘How often and in how many ways have you not taken God’s name in vain?’ A third, ‘How often have you not broken the day of rest for yourself and others?’ A fourth, ‘How often have you not defied God in those things in which you owed obedience and reverence?’ A fifth, ‘How often have you not offended your brother, and trodden compassion under foot?’ And so on, one after the other. All the ten with one voice cried, ‘Woe over him!’

“But the dying man writhed in agony on his bed, and could give them no answer. He

must have felt that he was utterly lost. At last he stammered out in despair,

“ ‘ Will nothing induce you to leave my bed, ye fearful accusers, that I may die in peace ? ’ ”

“ And they answered, ‘ Only on one condition will we go. When we ten have left, One will come in our place, and to Him you must unconditionally, with heart and soul, belong for all eternity. Do you agree to this ? ’ ”

“ The wretched man pondered. It seemed to him terrible ; his heart throbbed as if at its last beat. At length he answered,

“ ‘ Well, go then, and let the One come ! I would rather have to do with one than with ten ! ’ ”

“ Scarcely had he uttered these words than the dark accusers vanished, and in their place stood a radiant form, noble and gentle, the express image of Mercy. The wretched man fixed his glazed eyes on the form. Though dying he felt a new life within him. Suddenly his baptism and the long-forgotten lessons of childhood came into his thoughts, which his pious mother had taught him when he was a little child ; he thought about God, who is Love, and about sinners who could be saved. In an instant it all seemed so plain and so real, as if it had never been out of his thoughts. And he knew who the form was ! ”

“ Then a hallowed smile lightened up his

face ; involuntarily he stretched out his arms, and cried with a last effort,

“ ‘Yes, I will belong to Thee, body and soul, to all eternity ! Lord have mercy on me—receive my spirit !’

“ And his spirit fled. He had departed in peace !”

There was something of the bat nature about Aunt Betty. She seldom went out in the daytime ; in the evening, however, under cover of the darkness, she would make frequent excursions into the town, accompanied generally by a maid-servant. For these excursions, which in a certain degree were of a secret character, she kept an especial dress—disguise one might well call it. I can see her before me in her old hood, which was of some soft material, devoid of shape, and almost lapped over her face, and made her features unrecognisable ; her old woollen shawl with a long fringe, her thick leather boots, and a large unfathomable bag on her arm.

In this attire, beneath which it would not have been readily supposed was the sister of the rich and respected manufacturer, she used to set off with her maid on her evening adventures, like the Caliph Haroun and his trusty Giafour in the “Thousand and One Nights.” What her purpose was on these excursions

could not long remain a secret to me. It was to seek out the suffering in their own homes, in order to acquaint herself with their poverty, their respectability, and to ascertain the best way in which to relieve them.

But these visits by no means always had a satisfactory result. Certainly, it was far from her thoughts to search for adventures; but somehow or other they came to her; many a strange adventure she met with on these evening excursions.

Sometimes she would return home jaded and fagged, and sometimes quite put out. On such occasions she had lost all faith in human nature. But she did not remain long in this misanthropical vein. As soon as ever she heard of the misfortunes or sufferings of some other family, she was the same good-natured, compassionate soul as ever. She used to be especially moved by the piteous appeals in the newspapers to charitable persons. She could never withstand one of these. Her imaginative powers, equally excitable as her feelings, set themselves at once to work, and soon conjured up a fullness of misery, which was far in advance of what the advertisement revealed. And thereupon out she would set again on her evening excursions.

When I grew older I was sometimes permitted to accompany her instead of the ser-

vant. I remember very well one winter evening ; it was rather late before we set out. It was to inquire into an advertisement which in strong terms depicted some widow's poverty, who had seen better days. It was always a difficult matter to hunt out the exact spot where the sufferer was to be found. Generally it was in some of the remote and almost unknown streets, where the poorer population of the city was crowded thickly together. Filth, prostitution, and fighting here belonged to the general order of the day. It certainly required a warm, to say nothing of a courageous, heart for a woman to venture among such scenes. But it was still more difficult to find the way in these houses, four to six stories high, where twenty or thirty wretched families lived, or those dark fetid staircases and passages ; and then to hit on the one required of all these dens of misery.

This evening we had been very unsuccessful, and were very nearly giving it up. First we went into the wrong house. We clambered upstairs and downstairs, and were obliged to pass through a regular purgatory before we discovered our mistake and had got out. At last, however, we found the right house, and recommenced knocking at the doors to make inquiries. Fresh instances of

ill-will, incivility, coarse and loose jests, met us. But the direction was certainly right; and by following it we at last reached the garret. Here we paused for breath a moment, and to listen. A confused noise sounded from within, accompanied with loud laughter, talking, and the rattling of glass. Perhaps we had gone wrong again. "The despairing widow, and her children, sinking under the deepest destitution," could not possibly live here! We groped our way a little on one side, to come away from the noise and merriment, when we were so fortunate as to find a door. We knocked, but no one heard us. But the next instant a door opposite was opened, through which the noise issued, and out stepped a dashing matron with a candle in her hand, of plump form, and with ruddy cheeks and sparkling eyes, a modern Bacchanalian, of between thirty and forty years. Her wide cap ribbon was streaming behind her; the collar round her neck was unloosened, and hung down on one side. On one foot she had a slipper, and on the other nothing but a stocking.

My aunt asked in great confusion for Widow N. N.

"It is I," answered the woman, in a very free and easy manner. "Have the goodness

to come in." And she made as if she would conduct us to the other side of the passage.

But my aunt thereupon plucked up her courage, and all her composure returned.

"Is it you?" she said. "No; then with your permission we will go in here. Your good friends there may like to hear what I have to say to you."

And she pushed open the door of the room where the party were assembled. A deep silence reigned. At a sign from her the woman went in first; and I followed close behind, and remained standing at the entrance. It was a very mirthful, but comical, scene that presented itself to us. The company, and especially the hostess, was not deficient in impudence; though for a few moments they were somewhat dumbfounded. Madame had not expected so late a visit; everything was in disorder. And there stood my aunt in the door, a mystic form, furnished with a power and authority by no means peculiar to her. As soon as the mingled odours of beefsteak, tobacco, brandy, and punch that assailed us, allowed her to get her breath, she began to read the honourable company as emphatic a lesson as could be wished. I had never thought my dear good aunt could be so sharp. And as soon as she had had her say, she took

me by the hand, and stumped down-stairs again.

How indignant she was ! Such an abuse of people's Christian charity she had never dreamed of ! But the case was not without a degree of satisfaction. Her vexation was intermingled with a feeling of inward pride that she had been able to tell the shameless pack the truth to their faces, without any of them having dared to raise a voice against her.

But before we had traversed many streets her blood had cooled down considerably, and a reaction taken place in her good-tempered, easy disposition. In quite a different tone she began by saying :

" Perhaps I ought not to have spoken so sharply to them. Certainly it was a disgraceful imposture, and there can be no excuse for it. But with regard to the banquet which we came bouncing into, there are some extenuating circumstances. Poor people will live well when they can, and we must not judge them too severely in that respect. They do not have many pleasures ; they have to put up with and do without so much ; so that it is but natural that every now and then they should like to know what it is to live and to enjoy themselves. So they take things easy,

and turn reason out of doors in order to make merry. For many days they have too little; but on some day, or at least for some hours, they have a superfluity. Then, childlike, they give themselves up to enjoyment. On consideration, I really think I was too hard upon them!"

My aunt was the uncontrolled mistress of the household, and my father was by no means stingy towards her. There were quite as many out of the house as there were in it who received their food from her hand. There were more knocks at the back door than there were at the front, though my mother did not receive so few visitors. It was especially towards dark that aunt gave an audience, when jar after jar knocked at the door. To me naturally it was only the jars; the unknown and nameless persons were no matter to me. But my aunt knew them all perfectly, and many a good word of advice and many a warning she gave them into the bargain.

I remember so perfectly another evening excursion, which did not pass off without an adventure. My aunt was going after an advertisement again. This time we found the place without much difficulty, and met the woman, "the poor woman," at home. As soon as she saw us she burst into tears. My

aunt seated herself by her and sympathised with her, and allowed her to pour forth all her troubles into her bosom ; and this she did effectually, between her convulsive sobs. The poor woman's misfortune consisted especially in having a bad husband, who squandered everything away, and treated her badly. With a degree of truthful eloquence she gave a sketch of her necessities, and dwelt especially on the ill-treatment she received. My aunt quite shuddered at the recital, and the tears came into her eyes.

“ Poor, poor woman !” she exclaimed every moment, and at every such outburst the woman received an additional impetus in portraying her sufferings. But I thought to myself if the man was bad, the woman could not be much better in making out her husband to be the greatest brute that ever lived. There was something, too, in these forced outpourings of her heart that seemed very unnatural. She did not touch my heart, at all events !

But the case all at once assumed a form and proportions that were equally surprising to us both. As aunt and the woman were sitting together, in the very middle of it the husband returned home, and walked into the room. The woman stopped short with a sudden jerk in the very middle of an overflow of words,

and quickly wiped away her tears. A strange, oppressive silence ensued. The man kept regarding the scene before him with evident astonishment, and muttered something between his teeth. He was a simple workman, and, in spite of his wife's shocking sketch, appeared to be a very respectable man.

But aunt became inspired. She was so moved at the treatment the poor woman had had to suffer; her heart burned within her, and the hot words streamed from her tongue. She arose from her seat, and gave the man a most severe lecture, couched in a very free-spoken style, as she represented to him his godless, shameful conduct. He listened to her for a moment in utter astonishment, with mouth and eyes wide open, and allowed her to talk away as she pleased. But all of a sudden he interrupted her with a tremendous thump on the table, as he shouted out,

"I tell you it is a hellish lie altogether! Enough of this, madam! Come, pack yourself off this instant!"

But the most remarkable thing of all remains to be told.

The woman, who had been sitting all this while without speaking a word, now jumped up and took her husband's part, and, with her arms akimbo, poured forth a volley of abusive words.

It seemed exactly as if aunt had come with a whole pocketful of lies on purpose to set a husband and wife, who had no cause of complaint against each other, at variance. And she wound up by pointing out where the door was, and by recommending a speedy exit in a way still more unpolite than her husband.

Poor aunt did not lose any time in taking the hint. We tumbled out of the door and down the stairs, and did not come to ourselves again before we had got a good way down the street.

Naturally enough, aunt was very angry, but she was still more confused.

"I cannot make anything out of it, my boy," she said. "My head runs round! Which of the two really was the good-for-nothing, for I am sure it was not myself, though they did try to make out that it was? Was it not the husband, who drank and spent everything, and gave his wife and children the stick instead of bread? But then it is quite inconceivable to me how the woman at last turned against me, when I was defending her against her husband."

"I think, dear aunt, that the woman was the good-for-nothing," I answered. "She tried to wheedle you at the expense of her husband, in order to get you to fork out. But her husband returned, and there she was nicely

caught. Thereupon she resolved to take his part, and joined in in his attack on you ; else perhaps the beating she had been talking of might have been in earnest."

"God forgive me!" exclaimed my aunt; "but I think she would have richly deserved it."

As soon as we had got home, and the lamp had been lighted, my aunt took down her old bible, and seated herself on a chair to read before taking her things off. I noticed that her hands shook as she turned the leaves over. The light from the lamp fell directly on her face, as far as the hood permitted it, and I could see that it betokened an unusual degree of excitement, while certain strange contractions about the corners of the mouth showed how moved she was.

She soon found the right place, and began to read aloud :

"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

"For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink : I was a stranger, and ye took me in :

"Naked, and ye clothed me : I was sick, and ye visited me : I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

"Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we Thee an hungred, and fed Thee ? or thirsty, and gave Thee drink ?

"When saw we Thee a stranger, and took Thee in ? or naked, and clothed Thee ?

"Or when saw we Thee sick, or in prison, and came unto Thee ?

"And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

When she had come to the end, she began again, and in this way read the passage through three times. At first her voice was rather harsh, and inclined to break down, and it required some exertion to get the words out. But by degrees it got its natural sound again, and when she read out the sacred words for the last time, it was soft and mild, and full of touching melody. In the same proportion, too, her features became relaxed, and the old, gentle, good expression returned. No, not quite the old look, it seemed transfigured.

"So," she said at last, as she closed the book, "it has done me good ; now, thank God ! the knot is untied. For you must know, my dear boy, that there can be knots in the heart, of course in a spiritual sense ; and that is one of the very worst, as it is one of the most common ailments in the world. But in God's Word there is a remedy for every disease of the heart."

And the bible reading did me good too ; it was impossible but that such words of infinite love should go to my heart. I was still but a child. I had a lively feeling at that hour

that it was God who was speaking, and that He was speaking to me. When my aunt had finished reading, I could say the beautiful words by heart. And so I can still, as you perceive; alas! memory is a part of my torment. I shall hear those words once again, and from the King's own mouth. But then, oh woe, woe is me! I shall stand upon his left hand.

I was at that time still a child, but by no means the good child any longer which my aunt at first made me. A wild carnal nature had already begun to assert its sway over me; the world and its pleasures had begun to dazzle my eyes, and to drag me along with them. But even yet my heart was soft, and easily moved. It never did get really hardened as long as I lived. But it is idle to talk of it. My life has been full of emotions; but they were like the smoke which the next moment is dissolved and vanishes away.

But at that time it was different; God's kingdom had not yet left me far behind. As often as I became moved and touched in spirit, it returned in a streaming flood into my heart, and filled it entirely. So it was that evening. Involuntarily I folded my hands, and my heart said, "Abba, dear Father!"

"It does not trouble me a bit!" continued my aunt, as she took her things off; "for you

see, Otto, I was grievously mistaken in a person I wished to benefit; but I met Him, who from all eternity has been good to me, and my good intentions were not thrown away. He stood, as you have just heard, behind the woman who so shamefully deceived me, and said :

“ ‘Thou blessed of my Father! Thou hast done this unto Me!’

“No, Otto, there is no trace of any knot in my heart. Good-night, my own boy! We will go to bed now.”

That evening I did not forget to say my prayers before I fell asleep, neither did I omit them for many succeeding ones.

CHAPTER XXI.

THERE have been moments in my life when I have been, as it were, torn asunder. I will not say they occurred often ; and in course of time they became more rare. I have felt not only the deepest dejection, but the most intense anguish of heart ; a weight has lain on my soul so heavy that I scarce could draw my breath. It was the vivid feeling of my life's vanity, its worthlessness and sins ; it was the keen consciousness that I was going wrong, that I was hastening towards destruction.

“Return !” loud voices sounded all around me. “Oh, return !” And in the depths of my heart the echoes rung—“Yes, return, if it be not too late !”

And it was not too late ! No, even the very last time, it would not have been too late. Had this emotion of my soul had its natural course, had this struggle within been fought out to the end, a new and a better creature would have resulted from them. But it never

came to that. Its growth was for the most part broken off. As I used to sit there in deep sorrow and wretchedness, some gay thought or other would come floating into my mind, and snapping the thread of a new life asunder would carry me off with it into fresh whirls of enjoyment, where I quickly forgot myself again.

Yes, I have noticed it in myself and in others, that in some persons' lives it is just as if some malicious, mischievous power were carrying on its game—let me speak out plainly—its uncontrolled game. It never failed to appear, just as they had formed the best resolutions, and felt themselves to be in the best possible state for the reception and influence of what was good ; and they would fall again deeper than ever.

Will people then still deny that there is a Devil?

Yes, the Devil—do not let us mince the matter—it is useless to do so—it is of him I am speaking. There is a real Devil, and the number of demons is legion !

But does God then, the mighty, the compassionate God, remain quiet while this foul scene is being enacted in the world, and in the human heart? How can it harmonize with His compassionate and fatherly providence, to

leave men's souls thus in the power of demons, and at such moments as these !

Ah ! it is even He who, by His good angels, has awakened this restlessness and pain, this deep emotion in the soul ! It is He who has laid this weight upon the heart, and has got it to sigh, to tremble, and to quake. It is He who has brought us to a sorrowful consciousness of ourselves, and has given us a blessed presentiment that even yet it may be different, if we only will.

But we do not will ; that is the truth. What God at such moments gave and effected in us was the great part. The Devil was only able to do a very little part. But we would not let God take us prisoners, great though His love was, rich the blessings He strove to surround us with. And yet no sooner did the Devil whistle, than we were ready to set out to follow and to serve him.

What wonder then that we are now in Hell ?

I have still somewhat to say in this respect. But can I say it ? Will it not only be a cry of despair ?

The idea that Lili was my guardian angel, and that God in His mercy had sent her to lead me back from the path of destruction, frequently rose up in my mind. There was

something unspeakably touching in it; and I did not omit to form many good resolutions. But the emotion never came to an open rupture; there was never any earnestness about my repentance. I was willing enough to give Lili, but not God, my heart.

So Lili's mission turned out fruitless, and there was no salvation for me.

Now in Hell, I have come to the conviction that had I received God's grace, and become a new man, Lili would have lived, lived with me, and have made me happy! Is it not terrible?

Even at the very last, when death was beginning to curdle through her veins, aye through mine and hers too, it would not have been too late; I am perfectly convinced of it. Had I even then gone into myself, as a poor sinner giving God the glory, Lili would have lived. Death would have vanished from between us like a shadow of the night, its deed accomplished, to rouse the sinner from his stupor. God himself would have placed Lili in my arms fresh and warm, and a new blessed life would have lain before me.

She would have lived. But it was altogether vain; no power of love could have broken through the crust around my heart. What could she do else but die? Die then she must; it was a moral necessity; for to live

with me would have been a degradation, to her, a hateful profanation. In the world all ways were blocked up to her; whichever way she turned herself, she must have fallen into my arms. Only by one road could she fly and save her pure soul; it was the road that leads from earth to the kingdom of Heaven. Die then she must! And I am forced to say, "Better for her that it was so!"

But it is with the courage of despair I say it. I could tear myself to pieces without being able to quench the hatred with which I burn against myself. So happy as I might have been! Do you see I have more than a thousand thoughts; but had I only this one, it would contain all the torments of Hell for me. Do you understand now what Hell is? So happy as I could have been—happy first, then for ever blessed! Oh, woe, woe! is this to be borne?

I have been at a ball, a very large one too. As you well know, I have always been somewhat of a *beau*; but I was a ball *beau* but a very short time. It might have been said that I was too big, too much of an athlete to figure well in the dance. It is immaterial! But in my early youth I was passionately fond of dancing. I did not know anything

more enchanting than to glide over the floor to the sound of some lively music, with a lovely young girl on my arms, so entirely *à moi*, that it seemed as if I could have done with her as I pleased. Doubtless, you will call this frivolous. Well, such I was; and most of my companions were like myself. In languishing self-abandonment, in voluptuous self-forgetfulness, she would hang on my arm, only half conscious, her senses in harmony with mine; actuated by the same sensations, our pulses throbbing in unison, beat for beat; breathing, as it were, but with the same breath, that glowed warmly from one to the other. Truly a dangerous position this for two young hearts! It is intoxication, if anything is. For say what one will about dancing in principle, its fascination and charm, especially in the wild dance of modern days, depends solely on the free contact and fusion, as it were, of the two sexes.

And gradually, as the dance proceeds, their intimacy becomes ever more unrestrained. With increasing boldness the man places his arm around his partner's waist, and presses her closer and closer to him; he whirls her more and more wildly through the mazy evolutions of the dance, as if to make her feel how entirely she is in his power. Under the melting

influence of the music, the exertion, and the magic powers of excitement, she hangs a prey upon his arms. Truly, it is unnatural when voluptuousness does not positively demand a victim on such occasions.

I do not think any one would accuse me of prudery; but certainly if I had a sister, I should not like to see her thus tossed about from one strange man's arms to another's the whole night through. And had I seen Lili thus carried away in a man's embrace through the voluptuous mazes of the dance, I believe I should have struck him to the ground.

I remember two objections I had against dancing—when of riper years—as it is usually practised now. I was, I may state, always somewhat of an admirer of the beautiful in nature. First, that people dance through ten, fifteen, or even twenty years of their life. Surely some few years would be enough. Then dancing would resemble the graceful fluttering of the butterfly when it has emerged from the chrysalis. Let young people dance—becoming dances, of course. Dancing is a beautiful and natural thing to them, aye, and innocent too. For they are as yet unconscious of a voluptuous nature; it still slumbers beneath the transparent covering of the ideal.

And secondly, that people drain the plea-

tures of the dance to the very dregs. Let the dance cease while the animal spirits are still healthy. The butterfly must not lose the dust upon its wings. Neither should dancing become a passion, for it will not fail to excite other passions. A whole night's dancing is more than a carousal. Only look at those pale, jaded, dusty female forms—what a piteous, sorrowful spectacle! How beautiful, how fresh, they looked when the ball began! Can a father submit to see his daughter, a brother his sister, a man his betrothed, in such a degrading plight?

It was a large and brilliant ball. The company was certainly of a varied and motley nature; but even this enhanced the interest. The illuminations were dazzling, after the poor opportunities Hell affords, at least. I say poor, for a thousand lamps do not make it one whit the lighter. The flame is merely an illusion; not a ray of light issues from it. The orchestra was fully occupied; but it was only dumb music. Everything in Hell is illusive, consequently so is the music. One fancies one can hear it, and so one dances. They were mostly Strauss' waltzes they played. But when by chance I happened to look over the books of the performers, I found to my amazement that, instead of the notes of Strauss, the famous dance-music composer, they

had the writings of the theologian lying open before them.

The ladies' toilettes were brilliant. The fashions of at least two centuries were represented. So that, from the variety of costume, the ball bore a striking resemblance to a masquerade. But on the other hand, nothing could less resemble one; for all the finery and magnificence was transparent. One could see, spite of all the superincumbent clothing, the real naked individual beneath. Attractive, certainly; there were lovely forms in numbers! But do not let us speak of it. In Hell, attraction has lost all its force.

They tried to get me to dance; but I was too prudent to make a fool of myself in my old days. I merely took part in a Polonaise, and that certainly was something more interesting than ever I have experienced before, either in the world or in Hell.

We promenaded round the spacious saloon, and changed ladies *à tempo*, thereby enabling us to introduce ourselves to, and interchange conversation with, all the belles present.

Yes, it was a remarkable variety, truly! In order to expedite one in making out the social bearings, and to promote the general hilarity, a custom prevails here for everybody at all great gatherings like these to wear the year

of his death on his breast, either in the form of an elegant bow, or an order-like decoration. We found it a great advantage on the present occasion.

I cannot deny myself the gratification of introducing some of these ladies to you. And as I mention no names, I think I can do so without any breach of discretion.

What do you say? It will form a very neat album.

1.—1789. German. A noted poisoner. In the course of a few years she had poisoned her mother-in-law, her husband, her brothers; in short, with but one or two exceptions, the whole family. And it was not for the sake of gain, nor of hatred; neither was it under the impulse of any particular passion, that she committed these murders, but merely for pleasure. A female monster, who doubtless stands alone in history, as she surpasses all human experience. Delicately made, and graceful in person, she wears a face of almost childlike innocence; a velvety softness distinguishes her whole being. She is graceful, fascinating, rubs against you like a cat. It is impossible to come any nearer to the enigma of her unnatural being than to say that she must have come into the world as a cat in human form. I shuddered as she laid her soft, deli-

cate arm on mine, and pressed gently against me. We exchanged but one glance ; the full light of her greenish eyes fell on me for a moment. I knew that she was false, cruel, and yet I let myself be fascinated. It was not horror alone that made my heart throb ; and yet—shall I own it ?—it was with reluctance that I let go her arm to proceed on my way.

2.—1693. A Provence woman. Married with a Court official ; long reputed to be the most lovely woman at the Court of Louis XIV. And she was virtue itself, up to a certain point. For instance, she had never known any other passion than for gold. It was an official secret, that thirty thousand livres was the price of the most lovely woman's virtue. For that sum—be it said with shame !—any one was for sale. Therefore, she was known about Court by the *sobriquet* Danaë.

3.—1816. A Polish lady. A modern heroine : commanded a squadron under Kosciusko. Very beautiful ; perfect in figure, and in features ; but her great attraction consisted in her morality. Never yet conquered ! Never yet had she known any other love than that of her country. Her whole character was of a piece ; for she was brave and hardy as a man, though at the same time as delicate, refined,

and graceful as a woman. Never yet conquered! By constantly adhering to this principle, she made her fortune in the world; and she made her fortune many times; for she was really brave; she never succumbed to circumstances, however adverse they might be, but continually raised herself above them. And nothing deceived her; even in her eight and thirtieth year, she was quite youthful, and extremely pretty. Never conquered! With this avowal she gained her last success, when, in 1811, she entered the harem of Mahomet Ali, with princely magnificence.

4.—1644. An Irishwoman. One of the mistresses of the unfortunate Charles I. I recognised her from a masterly portrait by Van-dyck, which I had seen in London. Never has the world seen anything more coquettish than this lady. One might almost be tempted to call her the ideal of a flirt.

5.—1635. A German. Voluptuous, languishing, dazzling, especially by her large full eyes, and her transparent complexion. A traitress; herself betrayed. Left in Bologna, in great poverty and misery, a modern Ariadne, she was compelled to seek her subsistence by begging, in order not to fall to lower degradation.

It was also a bad time for the renowned painter, Guido Reni. Gambling had become

more to him than his profession. He was constantly squandering his money away ; while his pictures lost their charm, and funds came in but scantily. Thus he was well nigh worn away with pondering over how the matter really lay, and what it was he had lost as an artist, and how he should win it back again. Of what he lost in money, he took no account. But whilst he was pondering, he continued to gamble more madly than ever, and squandered away both his money and his talents.

One day he had lost everything he possessed, and more too. But as he was leaving the gaming-house, a young woman stood outside, with her hand outstretched in a suppliant attitude. A curse hovered on his lips, but he repressed it, for he had never before noticed such an expression of entreaty. As if petrified, he remained standing before the woman, who without speaking was yet so eloquent in her languishing, heaven-turned gaze. It was a perfect novelty, or at all events might easily pass for one ; it was a supernatural loveliness. Instantly he perceived what a gold mine this look alone opened for him. He had found the long-sought-for motive for a fresh flight aloft in his profession ; a means whereby once more to enchant a superficial world.

So at first he left off gambling, and gave

himself up once more to painting, with a zeal which at least resembled inspiration. The young German woman served as his model, and continued to be of use to him even long after her complexion had lost its brilliancy, and her form its luxuriant beauty; for the look still remained behind—that wondrous, blessed look.

First, he painted from his model a dying Lucretia; then, a dying Cleopatra; then, a dying Virginia; and next a living Virgin; and with this last exertion, he rested long on his laurels. His pictures made a tremendous success, and were in great demand. So he was obliged to bestow less time and care on them; but the look was there still, and people were content.

This look attained a world-wide fame, and gained many imitators; but Guido Reni was the inventor of it, and remained the master. Neither did he ever forget her to whom he owed the discovery. Frivolous Guido might be, but he was not ungrateful. As long as he lived, La Tedesca remained his friend, and he shared everything with her; but when she died, it was all over with him; his pictures became worse and worse; the look was wanting; the complexion assumed a greenish, unhealthy-looking, corpse-like colour. And bad

fortune too attended him at the gaming-table, till at last, utterly exhausted, he sank into the tomb.

6.—1731. An Andalusian; of half Moorish blood; a brilliant beauty, unrivalled in the dance. She seemed to be under the influence of a monomania; only one thought appeared to possess her even in this place and in the very midst of the dance. When I happened to address some remark to her, with reference to the pomp and magnificence of the ball, she answered, with a look that went to my soul: "I could have been so happy!" The next moment she had vanished.

7.—1810. An Englishwoman. A renowned clairvoyante, known in Paris as "La Belle Blonde." Chevalier Melville, one of those who, by the payment of a hundred louis-d'ors, had learnt the secret of animal magnetism from Mesmer himself, was the lucky discoverer and fortunate exhibitor of La Belle Blonde's natural talents. During the daytime the fair Englishwoman was the property of the whole Parisian world; of an evening, of an elegant and select circle, who could and would pay an *entrée* of forty francs; and of a night, if report spoke true, of the fortunate chevalier only.

But if La Belle Blonde was a clairvoyante, the chevalier was not. For early one morning

his angel decamped, with the money-box. They wittily remarked in Paris, that it doubtless was as it should be. The somnambulist had at last become quite enraptured. It was ecstasy in the highest degree: "She had been spirited away!"

8.—1651. A Swedish peasant girl from Dalarne. Her rare beauty raised her through numerous adventures to the rank of a princess; but she was not worthy of this elevation. "Have you seen the assassin of King Gustavus?" she asked me in a whisper. "There he stands!" I looked; but of what I saw, I will be silent.

9.—1848. How astonished I was! At home in my dining-room hung a superb picture, by a well-known artist. It was a three-quarter length portrait in natural size, representing a Roman beggar girl, in her picturesque rags, enchantingly lovely. A number of pictures in the interval from 1835 to 1842 are taken after her. For of course she was a model.

She was of genuine Roman blood, born in Trastevere, and a true type of a Roman beauty. Face, figure, deportment, and carriage, all were equally admirable in her. And those rags—there was a regular enchantment about them!

Our ladies of fashion in their full, elegant

toilettes; how poor, how silly they looked beside her in her rags! Was it the contrast between them and her beauty; or was it only the manner in which she wore them, and knew how to arrange them in an ever-changing style? Enough is it to say that there could not be anything more picturesque or enchanting.

But she even loved those rags of hers; she was actually proud of them, and would not have exchanged them for the costliest clothes. For she felt that not only did the fascination she exercised depend on them, but her independence too, and liberty. Her name was Paolina; but among the strangers of Rome she was generally known as "*La reina dei mendicanti*," the "beggar queen;" or simply "*La reina*." Here I had the original of my picture; I saw "*La reina*" before me!

One evening, as I was passing through one of the small streets of Rome, a young woman came flying after me, and clinging tightly to my arm prayed me to protect her. And I did protect her. It was "*La reina*!"

When the danger was happily passed, I followed her home, and we walked through the dark streets on terms of the greatest intimacy. But I was not generous enough not to try and take advantage of my position. Then

I first got to know "*La reina!*" She repulsed me with a seriousness, though with a good-nature, that was not to be gainsaid. With an openness which is only to be found in Italy, she next explained her position to me, and, in fact, made me her confidant. "She was happy now, very happy," she said. "Many were fond of her; nobody dared to insult her, and she was free as a bird in the air. If she let herself be tempted, everything would be lost; she would become a mere rag among rags. But these rags, so long as she could wear them with honour, she would not exchange for velvet, gold, or ermine."

Then she confided to me without mentioning names, what magnificent and tempting offers had been made her. But she had, "*sia benito Iddio,*" not felt the temptation. In short, it was I who was conquered on this occasion. I did not take a kiss, but she gave me one, from the fullness of her heart, with tenderness, yet without passion; and so we parted. As I could not gain possession of her any other way, I had her picture taken.

But some years later "*La reina*" suddenly disappeared. The noble, proud beggar girl had been able to withstand all temptations; there was only one thing she had not taken into account, and that was love. At last it

had caught her. She loved and gave herself away. A heaven seemed to open itself to her ; but yet her happy days were over. In her rags she had been a queen ; in silk and velvet she was nothing but a slave.

Well for her if she had not had to experience anything worse. But, alas ! it was not to be so. Betrayed again and again, she became wild and terrible. A demon was awakened within her ; she did not even shrink back from low crimes. Revenge and compensation she would have. Even still she was a prodigy of loveliness, graceful no longer, but always majestic. With a cold, though glowing heart she soared aloft, till at last she succeeded in turning the head of a sensual old prince. Only for a moment did she stand in all the fullness of her splendour, like a meteor in the sky, yet long enough to get her revenge. With a crash and a fall her glittering career came to an end. She fell never more to rise.

Now once more her arm rested on mine. Oh, what a gulf between now and then ; when we were wandering late that evening hour so confidently through the streets of Rome. In her attire, though it did not now consist of rags, I could plainly trace the fantastic style of old, happy days.

Involuntarily I sighed, " Only in innocence is true happiness to be found ! " I recognised

her at once ; and yet how changed ! How she regarded me as I bent over her and whispered : “ *La reina ! Sta sempre in ricordanza !* ” With almost feverish haste she replied, enlivened up for the moment, but still quivering with all the anguish of past reminiscences :

“ *O state Zitto, Zitto ! Nell’ inferno tutt’ e finito ! La gioja, l’ incuranza, l’ amorè, la speranza !* ”

You must not suppose that I got all these revelations, or even a portion of them, while dancing the Polonaise ; our opportunities for conversation were too short and transient.

After we had saluted each other, or the introduction was over, there was merely time to interchange a few words, when we had to separate again.

But I knew a good many of these ball belles beforehand, and not only that, but their histories too. Nothing can be hidden here in Hell, and news spreads with surprising speed—so I have easily been able to procure every desirable information concerning some of these interesting ladies.

Thus you will readily understand in what great danger I stood of losing myself, when the idea occurred to me of giving you at hazard an account of some of the frequent incidents that occurred in the changes of the Polonaise. The materials are so rich that

selection is a very difficult matter ; and one is in danger of telling more than is necessary, and than had been intended. But enough of this. Even the longest ball must have an end.

As I was on the point of leaving the ball a person came up to me, to all appearances a regular rake, with the intrusive remark :

“ You seem to me to understand all the minutiae. But have you ever been at the ‘ great ball ? ’ *Das ist ganz ’was anders. Ich sag’ Ihnen, ganz famos!* ” And he smacked his tongue.

I did not know what the fellow meant by the “ great ball,” and I had no inclination to ask him any questions about it. It was not long, however, before I had an opportunity of fully satisfying my curiosity.

Towards the time when the death-darkness comes on, a regular rapture seizes all the denizens of Hell. All powers are strained to the enjoyment of the short period which is still left. That this, like everything else, is an illusion, and merely causes pain, is, of course, a natural consequence. Gambling, debauchery, dissoluteness, all manner of foolish and shameless diversions have free and unrestrained bent ; there seems to be but one aim—to excite, to intoxicate, and to stupefy the senses. And for this end there are a thousand illusive means.

Everything is now allowed ; nothing too wild, too mad, or too disgraceful, but finds approval and excuse. The rabble, in every sense of the word, is predominant, and he meets with the greatest respect who carries his dissipation the farthest. At such a time, respectable people have hard work not to commit themselves. I do not at all mean by this that respectable people are not infected by the excitement. No ! all, without exception, are sucked into the whirl, as the so-called "large ball" testifies. But the difference is this, that whatever way things turn out, the respectable people are desirous of observing a decorous behaviour. But it is well nigh impossible.

Yet what need to explain my meaning at greater length ?

You have something similar to it in the world ; I mean—at that time when you give way to mirth, when all the devils are let loose, just before the long fast—the Carnival. The death-darkness is our long fast. But we have neither a Maundy Thursday nor a Good Friday. You have ; and you make every preparation to celebrate them becomingly. In a word, merriment with us is simply nothing but an exaggerated caricature of your Carnival.

Our merriment ends with the "great ball."

All classes, intermingled in the most motley manner, participate in it. Certainly we try and form our own circle; but we can but imperfectly succeed in doing so. For every large place has its own peculiar ball; but the ball goes through the whole of Hell, and it is an endless swarming to and fro.

Where genteel people try to give it a tone, the ball is opened very becomingly. The ladies are dressed in their most elegant toilettes, and the gentlemen are got up as beaux of the first water. Chastely and elegantly the dancing begins to the strains of the still, mildly lively music. But little by little they begin to turn round more quickly; they swing, they fly, they whirl themselves round. Their eyes become fixed in their heads, glassy and staring; the half-open mouth seems to breathe forth flames of passion. If any mortal were present, he would call that wild dance to the silent music repulsive; but soon he would call it appalling. Ever more quickly the dancers press up against each other, bosom against bosom, face against face. On the one side voluptuous languishment; on the other brutal lust. (Have you ever been in Paris during the Carnival?)

And, meanwhile, darkness comes on apace, ever more quickly, just as in warm climates,

where the sun at last does not sink down, but, as it were, falls below the horizon. So quickly does the last gleam of light in Hell vanish away !

But the dancers pay no heed to it. Wider and wider grows the whirling maze. But do not think that it is a pleasant diversion ; no, it is full of anguish. They dance away as if they were lashed on to it. Mirth is present, but the intoxication is lacking.

Soon the ladies have lost all their gracefulness and delicacy ; rumped female figures remain behind, with hollow eyes, pale cheeks, withered lips, dishevelled hair, and disordered dress. And the gentlemen ! Yes, it can only be said that they look like actual beasts !

Well is it that the darkness falls so quickly to hide this disgusting spectacle. No longer is it possible to discern man from woman in those intertwined forms. No longer is it they who whirl ; the whirl has carried them away ; they are unable to raise a voice against it. Ever more swiftly, ever more madly, they twirl round and round, till they disappear in the gloom.

Then all is over !

CHAPTER XXII.

You have doubtless experienced the power some flowers have in calling up recollections, especially sweet recollections, and in like manner in awakening slumbering passions and lusts. In the world this lust may be a pleasurable pain ; but here—yes, here it is a real Hell.

You must not conclude from this that there are flowers in Hell. There is, in fact, nothing ; actually nothing. Even withered flowers belong exclusively to the world. Oh, yè fools ! Is there needed anything more than this to convince you that the world, with all its wants, pains, and sorrows, is still a blessed and supremely happy place ? Is there needed anything than this, that it is bestrewed with flowers ? It is the superabundance of God's fatherly goodness, that streams over on all sides and produces the flowers. They are of no use these millions of flowers ; but they necessarily spring from the Being of eternal love. They are like pearls on the cup of heavenly blessings.

Flowers below, and stars above! Oh, how delightful to roam between the flowers and the stars! But you follow your noses without paying heed to the flowers below, or to the stars above, lost as you are in your miserable little self-individuality, with its thousand imaginary vexations and troubles. Oh, fools, fools, fools!

No, there are no flowers in Hell. But it is a part of our anguish here now and then to catch their perfume. Of course it is imagination; but so much the more powerful is the perfume, and so much the greater the effect it has. It is not only situations and moods that are thereby conjured forth, but real living persons, all the fullness of life in a given moment. Can you comprehend the meaning of this—"all the fullness of life and happiness conjured forth in a place where only death and boundless misery exist?"

Now it is a carnation! It sends forth its perfume from that young girl's bosom with the dark complexion, and black, sparkling eyes. At length I have been so fortunate as to get her alone with me for a moment. She struggled as I knelt before her; a hard contest between love and anger.

Now it is voluptuously stupefying jasmine! In that shady summer-house I and that slight,

light-haired girl had found a refuge from the burning noon-day sun. I had so much to tell her, but forgot it all in the expression of her blue melting eyes, in the perfume of the jasmine that waved its fragrance around us.

Now it is a softly intoxicating honeysuckle ! We were taking an evening ramble through the grove. On the morrow we were to part, I and that graceful young wife with her melancholy, brown eyes, and that sad smile, who was chained to a clod of a husband. She called me her friend, and gave me a piece of honeysuckle. But I could not refrain, on this occasion, from giving her a tender name.

These reminiscences, the sweeter they are the more fascinating, the more cruelly do they lacerate the soul. They stir up the passions and desires to such a degree as almost to drive one mad. They burn through the bones and marrow, though the flesh no longer exists, and though there are no longer any means to quench them.

It is always the strong-scented flowers whose power I thus trace out. I never detect the perfume of such delicately-scented flowers as the violet or the mignonette. And yet there is one single exception ; and though it is not devoid of pain, still I bless it. Of late I have often detected the delicate perfume of

a rose. I know that rose; I can see it before me. Only but a breath, as it were, of pink is spread over its tender petals; only in its centre is there a little blush. At a glance one might think it was a white rose; but I know it better, it is a red one. Lili once gave it to me; or rather I begged it of her, otherwise it would scarcely have occurred to her to give it me. We were standing one forenoon in the church of St. Mark in Venice, before the altar of the Madonna with its remarkable Byzantine paintings. For an instant we were alone; a poor cripple had just hobbled away, blessing us a thousand times. A hallowed feeling had insinuated itself into my heart; hallowed, possibly, just because the beggar had called Lili "*La sua sposa*." Lili either had not heard it, or had not comprehended it. She was standing with a rose in her hand, the express image of herself.

"Give me that rose, Lili!" I entreated. She gave it without hesitation.

"No, you must kiss it first," I said. She kissed the flower, and then handed it me with one of her ravishing smiles.

Of course I kissed it too. Lili blushed a little; though, in her innocence, she certainly did not understand the meaning of it.

It is this rose whose perfume I have so often

of late detected. What can it mean? Is there a peculiar, transcendental, connecting link between the souls in bliss and those in torment, like a wave of sweet perfume? Oh, happy thought! Could I but retain it. . . . Ah, it is gone already.

The awful moment is approaching, when the brilliant glow from Paradise will stream forth triumphantly; yes, it must be very near. And shall I see her again. Even if it be to my sorrow, no matter! I shall see her again. Terrible will it be to relapse once more into darkness; but her image no one can deprive me of. Even amid the torments of Hell it beams upon me. Can I be utterly forsaken of God in this communion with one of his saints? I know that she thinks of me, as I do of her. Yes, and what is more, I know that she loves, even though it be with no more than a sisterly love. Oh, what shall I say? . . . Can God be a Father under conditions like these—the sister in Heaven, the brother in Hell, eternally lost?

You remember that I recently alluded to a treaty that had gone the way of all flesh, and had arrived in Hell. Drawn up in the name of the Triune God, and “for all time,” it had lasted scarce twelve years; that is to say, only

until one of the Great Powers that had sworn to observe it found a favourable opportunity for treading it under foot. In short, it was the old tale over again of the case between wolf and the lamb. Unhindered by the other parties to the treaty, who, imposed upon by the impudence of the deed, drew back with growls—their honour, of course, unimpaired—the strong had brought the little and the weak quickly into subjection, and had done with him as he pleased; of course for no self-interested purpose, but only in the service of justice, and for the sake of dear peace. The wolf knows well enough how to overlay his words.

Well! the poor little one was obliged to keep the peace, and accept whatever terms were offered. The result of this peace was of course another treaty, drawn up anew in the name of the Holy Trinity—think, what blasphemy!—and again to hold good through all time—what shamelessness!

But worse still! The first article in it determines, that for the future there shall not only be peace, but friendship, between their majesties and their respective peoples. Think, after the strong had robbed the weak, even to his very shirt, and had got all he wished, to offer him his friendship, and for the poor fellow to be obliged to extend his hand! It is a piece

of impudence that surpasses human nature, and merges far into the diabolical.

You may, then, readily understand that such a treaty as this, even without being torn asunder, must needs travel to Hell; and it came before the ink was well dry. But what you will not so readily understand, perhaps, entangled as you are in the twaddle and prejudices of the world, is, that this treaty, even in Hell, has excited attention, and is in everybody's mouth. In a certain circle I have heard nothing else spoken of since it came here.

These introductory remarks were essential to the proper comprehension of what follows.

I was recently in church. It was not the first time, but I have felt almost ashamed to speak about it. And in fact I continued away from it out of choice; but here, in Hell, one must do a great deal that one has no inclination to do, under the influence of a powerful impulse from within. Need I add that one feels very miserable at having to go in harness and endure the lash in this way.

Yes, we have a Church Establishment. There is, indeed, nothing wanting in Hell. We have everything that is; and yet it is as if we had nothing.

Of any common church, you understand, there can of course be no mention; and so

I only said a Church Establishment—I might just as well have said Church Dis-establishment; it would be all one. Just as little, of course, can there be any mention of a congregation, or any confession, or in fact of anything essential and real. “We go to church,” and that says everything. . . . But, God have mercy on us, what a church-going it is!

There are about as many churches as there are priests in Hell, and their number is not so few. All infidel and unfaithful priests, all those who have outraged the Gospel for the sake of gain, who have only been hirelings over God’s flock, are gathered together here. Now they are consumed by a burning zeal for the Gospel, but the Gospel is ever absent; by love towards the flock, but there is a flock no longer. They build church after church, and preach day in and day out. If they only could succeed in getting one single word of God out, both they and their hearers would be saved. But they cannot, and never will succeed. However, they are driven by a certain inexorable power to make the attempt again and again, ever to be searching after the pearl which they once trod under foot in the dirt.

And people here are as mad after God’s word now as ever they despised it before. Hell is full of Christians—it sounds strange,

but so it is—namely, of all those with whom Christianity was merely a name, a habit, a custom, a cloak for knavery; of all those who, though they heard the glad tidings of salvation early and late, never gave themselves the trouble to appropriate to themselves salvation in a new and a better existence; of all those who either dallied with holy things, or shamefully fell away when the time of trial was at hand. Now they are devoured with a ravenous craving after God's word; and if they could but hear one single word, they would be released from their suffering. But they never will hear it; and they know it well; most of them have a lengthened experience. But, however, they cannot do aught else than incessantly flock again and again to the place which they call church, and listen to what the persons have to say whom they denominate priests.

So the churches are always crowded. But for all that it is never difficult to find room; for a spirit, a shade, can contract himself to an infinite degree. Therefore, neither is there any need to subscribe to a seat in the church, as is the case in theatres, where the purse decides the matter. That is one advantage Hell has over the world! But it never occurs to any one to congratulate himself thereon.

The other day I was at a large and very animated party. It was there, just for curiosity's sake, that I delivered those brilliant lectures, which among many others had been held in our *Landdag* with reference to our church constitution. They created a wonderful sensation among the company, and from thence extended to a wider circle. Quite certain is it, that better subject for comic declamation in Hell had never been known before.

Among the guests was a Pastor R—— I had nearly mentioned his name; but you know it is contrary to my principles to do so. He was a good old acquaintance of mine.

In his time he was a much admired sensational preacher, with great powers of declamation, and not a little proud of his gift withal. In other respects he was one of those priests whom the world calls liberal, and in every sense thinks nothing beneath him saving the purely spiritual. When we were separating he said to me:

"Come to hear me some time or other! My church is at the corner of Carnal Lust and Frailty"—do not be surprised at our street names—"fronting the first-named one. Any child can show you the way. I have just got a splendid sermon on the stocks."

He used the word "child," and you must not be led astray by the expression. Of children, that is to say, of actual children, there are none in Hell. But do not people in the world use the expression, "great babies," or "old children?" Are there not numbers of persons who reach a high age without ever being grown up? Well, of such old children there are more than can be counted fooling about in Hell!

So I went to hear my *quondam* reverend friend, at the corner of Carnal Lust and Frailty. As well him as any one else! Nothing came of it, however, except spiritual prostration.

I came in rather late. The Communion Service before the sermon was just over, and a hymn was being sung. But, great God, what a song! Instead of songs of praise, the most lewd songs I ever have heard assailed my ears, the very refuse of humanity. But the greater proportion of the congregation consisted not only of the better, so-called respectable class, but even of the educated, refined classes. Old men, whose hoary hair should have inspired one with veneration; young women, whom one would have thought were innocence itself, took as it were an ecstatic part in this shameless choral song. Father and mother took the lead for

their children; the husband for his wife or sweetheart, without any sense of shame.

Alas! scarcely had I taken my seat among the others, than I was just as bad as the rest! In obedience to an irresistible impulse, I too joined in the diabolical hymn. My aspirations had a sacred direction; it was my earnest wish to sing praises. But I was compelled to blaspheme as soon as ever I opened my mouth, however much I shrunk from it. The lewdness in my nature, as it were, tickled me, till I let myself be fascinated as the others.

At last the singing was over, and the priest stood up in the pulpit with a hallowed air. But this lasted only a moment, when he began to make the most hideous and ridiculous grimaces; and it was some time before he became so far master of his refractory features, as to be able to commence with—

“My devout hearers . . . ”

It was quite evident that it was his intention to preach a sermon edifying both to himself and to the congregation. But he could get no farther in the direction of edification. For the most abominable balderdash poured forth from his lips. It was all in vain that he tried to check and restrain himself; he only fell from one slough of twaddle into the other. By an extraordinary exertion at last he ma-

naged to break off, and a pause ensued. Presently he began again, with an immense degree of assumed dignity—

“My devout hearers . . . ”

And, imagine my surprise, when he blandly introduced the “weaver’s” speech in the Church reformation matter with an indescribably comic effect. He weaved away just as if he had the texture before him. If ridicule had been his aim, he could not possibly have done it better. But nothing was farther from his thoughts, and it was that which made it still more comical. Quite dumbfounded he strove to tear himself away from the flood of eloquence which was carrying him up and down, hither and thither, along with it. And at length he succeeded! He takes a new direction with extreme unction, and promises better things. But, oh, love! before he is himself aware of it, he is already far advanced in the speech of the fire brigade inspector on the same occasion.

Had it been a trick, it would have been incomparable. For it was a totally new kind of declamation, and the transition was quite sudden. He had done with the loom, and began to squirt now. In lofty jets at intervals the water streamed out, and sprinkled the souls below. But it possessed no extin-

guishing property. On the contrary, the result was an irrepressible laughter, in which none, even with the best of wills, could keep from joining in.

But this boisterous applause was not at all encouraging to the speaker. It was just the very reverse; he writhed piteously. Once more he strained all his powers to obtain a hearing. It was a critical moment, and it seemed as if he would succeed; for when, after a short pause, he began again, it was really himself that was speaking. But, oh, fate! the next instant he had fallen into the empty, abrupt phraseology of the literate! It was just as if he were cracking empty nuts (there was not even a worm in them), and was throwing the shells over the people's heads. There was only one thought in his discourse, and that was not his, but the hearers'—“Where is the kernel? where is the kernel?” His lecture lifted itself higher from moment to moment. From hazelnuts he mounted to walnuts, and from walnuts to cocoa-nuts; crack, crack;—they were all empty! At this giddy height of emptiness he soared quite away; nobody could follow him any longer. At last he became so enormously hollow in his address that even the emptiest heads and hearts were all on the work, and the arches of

the roof, from want of elasticity, were rent into large fissures.

Whereupon the laughter grew so boisterous, and the tumult so crazing, that the preacher was obliged to stop *nolens volens*. With a convulsive twitch he slid away from the literate's moral embrace, and, crest-fallen, slunk out of the pulpit.

In order to guard against every misapprehension with reference to the clamour and mirth I have just described, let me *en passant* remark—

Have you ever heard the noise a living person's bowels can make? Well, it was just like that. And have you ever heard a person grinding his teeth and laughing in his sleep, under the influence of gripes in the stomach? The merriment and the laughter was exactly similar.

Directly the clergyman had left the pulpit the clerk began to intone a solo in a cracked voice. For a long time he was in a state of perplexity as to what he should do, till at last he began a well-known lewd military song with all his might and main, and the song was sung in full chorus with horrible reverence.

Then came the concluding part of the service.

"In the name of the Triune God," began the priest.—

We were all attention ; it was a very devout beginning. I listened with my whole soul.

At the same moment the clerk tried to make himself as small as he could, and to slip by the priest. But as he was on the point of adroitly escaping, the priest seized hold of him by the neck with a powerful grasp, threw him under his feet, and in a trice stripped him of coat, waistcoat, and shirt—it looked exactly as if he was stripping off his skin—and then continued, holding the unfortunate clerk under him the while with an iron hand, as if nothing had occurred :—

“FIRST ARTICLE.

“For the future there shall be peace and friendship between the priest and clerk and their respective houses and families.

“SECOND ARTICLE.

* * * * *

And so he continued to chant article after article, and at every fresh article gave the clerk a good squeeze by the throat, in order that he might make no mistake about his position. The involuntary nod the poor fellow made signified his hearty assent. The assembly evinced their approval in very different ways. Some laughed, and cried, “Bravo! cursed good!” But the greater number growlingly showed their disapprobation.

And yet there was not a single soul that stirred an inch.

The priest continued his ungodly service. How many articles there were I cannot say, for I had soon got more than enough. With a heavy heart—oh, so heavy!—I slunk out of church.

Yes, heavy! It was no wonder. It is hope that lightens the heart. When hope disappears the heart becomes heavier and heavier; and when hope is utterly gone, it becomes too heavy to be borne—at least by a mortal. With us who are dead—alas! . . . it is another affair.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Is it not strange, but at the same time horrible, that the sweeter a recollection, the more bitter does it become to my heart in this place? I am a prey to sheer despair. Not always to that raging despair to which I give vent, but to that which is quite motionless, because it feels death in itself, and suffers all the agony of death.

Despair in Hell is our daily bread; it never quits us. Of course, now and then it must rage forth; but that still despair is the worst.

At times, when I am sitting buried in myself,—with closed eyes I had nearly said, but it is indifferent; here it is of no avail to close the eyes; but—I mean lost in myself, I experience the strangest feelings and perceptions.

A short while ago I thought I was all of a sudden set down in a wood in spring time. It was one of those lovely days when spring has just burst through the bonds of winter in triumph; and not only is all nature

glad, but the human heart, too, rejoices. Yet nowhere is the vernal feast so gloriously kept, nowhere has it such a magic power, and such exaltation, as in the wood.

The varied notes of the woodland songsters echoed clearly in my ear, and made my heart throb with an indescribable excitement. The perfume of the forest streamed towards me in scented waves, and filled my breast with its refreshing influence. And, to make the enchantment complete, I thought I could hear Lili's sweet voice through the wood.

I sprung to my feet, and looked around me in a state of great agitation. Oh, what anguish! So happy as I had been. And where was I now? For me there was no longer the song of birds, no sweet perfume, no love.

One summer we were staying in the country near the beautiful lake F——. On the farther shore the well-known forest of G——, with its sloping hills and dales, extends for miles in all directions, with its changing lights and shadows. My mother had a party of old friends staying with her, so that I was at liberty to pass my time as I pleased, when I came to spend a few days at a time with her. And I enjoyed my freedom, and the beautiful summer, in a way which I shall never forget.

Whenever we were able I and Lili used to set out early in the morning across the lake to spend the day, gipsy fashion, in the forest, where I knew no one could find us. To me it was especially delightful thus to withdraw, and, as it were, disappear from the busy world. You know, of course, what this forsaking the world signified with me. I had no idea of giving up the world to win the Kingdom of Heaven; nothing lay farther from my thoughts! No; young as I was, I was already beginning to be *blasé*, tired and weary of the world, without having anything better to set in its place. And yet, I must not do myself injustice. Perhaps some nobler, some higher impulse was at work within me.

And Lili too found some pleasure in thus losing herself, as she termed it. But there was this great difference between us, that while anything unnatural offended me, nature drew her to herself. "We will try for once to live a wild uncivilized life!" I said to myself, as I took Lili by the hand, and plunged into the thickest part of the wood with her. And we did do so as far as we could. A gipsy's life was my pattern. We passed the whole day in leisurely wandering about in all directions, without aim or object, giving up ourselves entirely to enjoyment. Whenever we came to a spot that looked inviting, we

would rest there a while, and then set off to discover other places as beautiful or as interesting. I had taken good care beforehand to have provisions ready for us in different places, at the cottages of the forest rangers; while at the same time we also took something with us.

Lili was at that time just about twelve years old. My mother did not particularly approve of these excursions, but did not say much about it, as she knew well enough that I should not willingly relinquish them.—“Only do not make Lili too wild!” she contented herself with saying. But there was no fear of that; it would have taken much to have led a nature like Lili’s astray. On the other hand these excursions did her a great deal of good, for it was such a change from the cribbed, confined life she usually led.

They were charming days; Lili’s company was as refreshing to me as the fresh, sweet perfume of the forest. All her charms, mental and physical, displayed themselves to view on these wanderings. Like a regular child she prattled away, and amused herself, laughing and shouting for joy at she knew not what, so that the echoes rang again through the wood. How perfectly free and graceful were all her movements! She must examine everything, bounding now on this side, now

on that, finding everywhere something to notice. It was wonderful the quick eye she had for Nature's little secrets! Even the very tiniest thing, how ever it might be hidden, did not escape her notice. Where other people would have seen nothing at all, she would discover numberless beautiful and strange things, such as plants, animals, and all manner of natural curiosities. It was just as if the wood disclosed all its mysteries to her pure, quick glance. The roe-deer came out of the thickets in perfect confidence to look at her; I verily believe they would have liked to play with her. The fox went gently along the outskirts of the wood and scratched up insects and woodmice for his supper, only now and then cunningly lifting his head, so as not quite to lose sight of her. The birds hopped on the boughs to hail her with their little songs, or twittered up and down the branches to show her their tricks. The squirrel sprang over her head from bough to bough, and followed her right through the wood out of curiosity. The birds' nests were everywhere visible to her, and the bees' nests high up in the hollow trees. If there were ant-hills near by—of the large red-ants—two colonies would begin to wage a bloody war with each other for her diversion. Rare flowers and plants seemed to spear forth

beneath her light footsteps. Once I searched in vain for a specimen of the "mimosa," which I knew ought to grow on a certain spot. Directly she went to look for it it came to her hand, though she did not even know the flower.

How everything enchanted her, and at the same time made her enchanting! Yes, she was lovely; incomparable in my eyes, with her sylph-like movements, with her beaming eyes, her sweet smile, and musical laugh.

At dinner-time we would encamp close by one of the ranger's huts, and light a fire at the foot of a tree to boil the water. If there was a spring close by, so much the better; and there we would pitch our camp, and enjoy the gratuitous music at our banquet. I left the entire housekeeping arrangements to Lili, who was only too pleased to undertake them. How busy she was! how charming she looked! how full of resources! and how thoughtful! Never have I enjoyed such feasts. I used to call her on these excursions my little wife; a title she accepted with a happy smile, and with an air of becoming dignity. And truly, she took such tender care of me, as the best little wife and housekeeper could have done.

Dinner over, she would read aloud while I was enjoying my cigar at my ease. Sometimes I would fall asleep. Then she would

keep guard over me, and brush the gnats and flies away; and when I awoke the first thing I saw, was a pair of bright stars, which were none other than her dear wakeful eyes.

At other times I would read to myself, or pretend to read, while I listened to the melodious sighing of the wind in the tree-tops, or to the numberless mysterious sounds that broke the solemn silence of the forest. At such times Lili was left to her own devices to pass the time away. But she was never unoccupied for a moment; something new was constantly starting up for her. She would weave garlands of flowers, or plait together bands of coloured grasses, or pluck the wild berries to surprise me with a dessert after my dinner. But she never wandered away out of sound of my voice.

In short it was a complete idyl; never have I read or heard of one more beautiful.

One day—we had almost traversed the entire length of the forest—I suddenly came upon a house, which I knew but too well, though it had not been in my thoughts for many a day. It was the very house where I had lived with Anna (another idyl, but of a different nature); where I had ruined her. So great was my thoughtlessness, that I had actually forgotten that we were near the scene

of the most shameless infamy I should ever have to reproach myself with. I started back, I tottered, and almost fell to the ground with emotion; Lili grew alarmed at my paleness. But it was long before I could give any answer to her anxious questions, whilst we hurried away from the spot. What I did at length answer, I do not know; but this I remember, that I could not look her in the face again for that day.

How painful were her tender, anxious inquiries to know what ailed me! She little suspected, poor child, what a foul, hideous deed she was innocently alluding to; what I could have told her was as far remote from her mind as earth from heaven. She little suspected that the very same demon which had ruined Anna was in a manner threatening her; and that I, her friend, her best, her only friend, was the lord or the slave of this demon.

That day we wandered far, but without enjoyment. I had no peace.

Poor Lili, what expectations she had raised of this day, and how brightly it had begun! It turned out sorrowful and wearisome altogether! She was nearly fainting, but I did not notice it.

As we emerged from the wood towards evening to enter the boat, we found the lake

a sheet of foam. A storm had come up, and it threatened to be showery. The waves came rolling in crossways, so that I did not dare to venture out with Lili. There was nothing left for us but to walk round the lake. But poor Lili was tired; and, for a great part of the journey the wind would be against us, and already it was beginning to rain. There was no time, however, to reflect. So I wrapt Lili up in a light overcoat I had with me, and took her up in my arms. In vain she assured me that she could walk. I would and did carry her.

How light a burden she was; how sweet and precious! It seemed to me that I could never weary of carrying her, as I pressed her firmly to my bosom, and hastened along against the storm. It was nearly four miles round the lake, and the road was bad and sandy. Shower after shower broke over us, and the rain dashed in my face. But I was glad to be on the land, to have something in which to exercise my powers for Lili's sake. I heeded nothing.

It was touching to see how anxious she was; every two or three minutes she would express her fears that she was too heavy for me. But when she perceived that I was resolutely bent to hold her in my embrace, how loving and

grateful she became, what sweet, tender words she whispered in my ear, to make my burden lighter, and the road shorter!

I had well-nigh forgotten all about Anna in my happiness! But even at this hour I could not keep the bad thoughts away. I thought of the "Rape of the Sabine Women," *i Loggia dei Ranza* in Florence. That seductive picture was represented to the life in me and Lili. But I forcibly expelled the unworthy thought from my mind. In order to keep myself in check, and at the same time to amuse Lili, I drew another comparison in my mind that suited our case equally well, though at the same time it was the direct opposite, namely, Saint Christopher carrying the child Jesus.

I began to tell her the legend of the heathen Reprobis, who, conscious of his gigantic strength, would only serve the strongest, and thus at last was referred to the Lord Christ. On his powerful shoulders he carried the Holy Child, and was well nigh fainting under the burden. Then he acknowledged His Master, and obtained the name Christopher.

While I was telling the story, Lili had fallen asleep in my arms. She had twined one arm round my neck, and her warm cheek pressed against mine. Softly I sped along.

But the history I had been narrating made a deep impression on myself. The Saviour so livingly portrayed had penetrated into my being. It was long since I had had any thoughts to spare for Him. But the faith of my childhood, though it lay deeply buried, was not dead yet ; it broke forth from the turbid depths of my heart with many a sweet and bitter reminiscence ; but the bitter ones were the most powerful. What an amount of debt had I not heaped on my head in my short career ! But the greatest of all was what I owed Anna !

Then my burden grew ever heavier and heavier. I had a feeling as if I was wandering along under the burden of my sins. And truly, Lili, whom I carried in my arms, was already numbered among my accusers, though she herself knew it not.

With unsteady gait I hastened along through the murky night. The storm increased each moment ; it had become a regular tempest. The rain dashed in my face so as well-nigh to blind me. The water rushed far up the rocky shore along the edge of which the path wound. Sometimes I had to wade through the water, and the waves dashed around me as if they would tear me away with them. It was with great difficulty I could keep on the path, but still I laboured on. The perspiration

streamed out of every pore ; but it was no longer the warm moisture of exertion, but the cold sweat of anxiety. It was not from without, but from within, that my strength was failing me. I felt utterly miserable. Harassed with remorse, alarm, and self-contempt, I was at last in the right mood to lose myself, and become a new and a better man. But before it came so far, a light gleamed from the house toward us. My thoughts now were diverted into another channel ; and my emotion at the same instant vanished.

Ah ! if that path had only been but a thousand paces longer ! Those steps might, perhaps, have spared me the journey to the torments of Hell !

When I stood in the lighted parlour, dripping wet, gasping for breath, utterly exhausted, I had left remorse, repentance, and fear, out in the darksome night, and felt only joy at having escaped from them.

Lili awoke now for the first time.

“ Oh, what a beautiful dream ! ” she whispered to me with her eyes still half closed, as I wished her good-night, and kissed her forehead.

Next day she told me her dream.

“ I dreamt, ” she said, “ that I was standing on a river’s brink, when St. Christopher, carrying the child Jesus on his shoulders, came over

to me from the other side. And the child seated itself by me on the grass on the bank. We talked and played together, and I was so happy. The mighty Christopher was standing by us and watching us, as he leaned on his long staff.

“We plaited the grass stalks in all manner of shapes; but the child was my master. First he plaited a cross, then a crown of thorns, which he put on his head.

“Here and there among the grass were some red flowers that hung down by their long stalks, looking exactly like drops of blood.

“Then he began a different game. He got me to look into his eyes, and asked, ‘What do you see?’ Yes, what did I see? First I saw the sower, who went out to sow, as clearly as I see you now. Then I saw the good Samaritan; yes, I thought I could hear him speak. Lastly I saw the good Shepherd, with the lost lamb in His arms. And much more could I have seen, when it occurred to me to ask, ‘But is it not true that wicked men have crucified Thee and pierced Thy side with a spear?’

“‘Yes, you must not doubt it,’ He answered. And He showed me the marks of the nails in His hands, and a blood-red scar in His side. Then, when I began to weep bitterly, He added :

“ ‘But, Lili, it pains me no longer ; it has long since been healed by my Father’s love in Heaven, and by my brothers’ and sisters’ love on earth.’

“ At last he asked, ‘ Would you like to be carried a little way by my friend Christopher ? Where will you go ? ’

“ ‘ I would go to the Holy Land,’ I answered quickly ; ‘ but it is so far, and then I shall be parted from you.’

“ ‘ It is not so far as it seems,’ He answered ; ‘ and we two will never part more. You will find me there too. If you will, then come.’

“ Whereupon the mighty Christopher took me up on his shoulders, and wandered far, far away with me. By day he followed a little red cloud : by night a large, shining star. I knew it was the star of Bethlehem. And we passed through many foreign lands ; saw many different people, and heard diverse languages ; over mountains and valleys, across rivers and floods, and at last across the sea. There was no land to be seen ; the waves rolled so high, so high ! Then I became terribly frightened, and thought that we should perish. But Christopher said, ‘ Fear not, my child ! I have before now borne the Lord. Your weight is but little to His.’

“ So at last we reached the land, and trod

upon a sandy shore. It was the Holy Land. And on we went, past Jerusalem, as the sun rose up; and its white walls upon the heights seemed as glorious as in days of yore. Some few paces farther, and we came to a little village between the mountains. Here the star stood still. I knew that it was Bethlehem.

"Christopher set me down before a lordly-looking house.

"A door opened, and there stood the child Jesus again. He took me by the hand, and led me in, and said to me, with a smile of love, 'Lili, I have but a stable to bid you welcome in here. But when you have done with the world it shall be better for you.'

"And he threw His arms around my neck and kissed me.

"At that moment I awoke. For we were at home. Oh, Otto, I should so like to have dreamed a little longer!"

"Do you not think, dear Lili," I answered in jest, "that it is all that one can desire, in one hour's time, to go from hence to Bethlehem and back again, to say nothing of all the beautiful things you saw?"

"Yes, that is true! I must rest contented till Christ bids me welcome to a better place, to His eternal home," answered Lili quietly.

CHAPTER XXIV.

I HAD almost given up all hopes of meeting Anna again; for I had searched so long and to no purpose. She was, as it were, driven away like dust before the wind from my paths, and they were both many and long.

But Hell is a large place, and its inhabitants are numberless.

For a time I had quite forsaken my old habits; I might almost say I lost my senses in roaming about after her in all directions, like a regular vagabond, both in and out of the throng. But an insatiable, hankering longing hurried me along. It burned within me. I thirsted (and such a thirst as that no man has ever felt; no, not even in the desert when death was settling on his lips), I pined away after her. Not that I thought she could slake my thirst; I knew but too well that she was a dried up spring; dried up already in the world, to say nothing of Hell. In vain she wrings out her clothes, her hands and hair;

not a drop of water falls from them. But she carries about with her the key to a frightful mystery, unconsciously to herself. Thus she has attained fresh importance in my eyes, and has once more become the object of my pursuit.

Oh! how different from those days, when the warm, passionate blood flowed through my veins; when in her I saw merely a flower in the great kingdom of nature, which it was worth the while to pluck! I must see her again, study her features, and find, if possible, a confirmation to that terrible thought which had dawned upon me at our last interview. Not that I doubted it; but I was not certain, not positively certain at least. I would like to try the case over again, weigh the testimony, and pass sentence—over myself. It was, therefore, necessary for me to see her again, and, if possible, get her to speak. Her features were certainly credible witnesses; but her tongue was the last great witness that could definitely clear up the matter. It was very doubtful, however, whether I should succeed in getting her to submit to my questions. But whether or no, likely or unlikely, I must find her and make the attempt.

At length, very recently, I met her again.

I did not only meet her, but came behind her. She was sitting by the river, and staring down so fixedly into its black, slimy depths, as if she entertained the thought of throwing herself in. In very truth there is something in Hell which at least resembles satisfaction.

For a moment I forgot myself and everything else in contemplating her. Cautiously I crept nearer and nearer; and by stretching myself out flat on its bank like a shadow in the sunshine, got quite close to her. I was scarce distinguishable from the miry bank.

Leisurely and at my ease, though my heart throbbed and burnt with feverish anxiety, I began to scrutinize her. First surveying her whole person, then taking feature by feature, I thoroughly examined her face. The scrutiny was extremely painful; but I faithfully performed it. But the result was startling; I had well nigh jumped to my feet and betrayed my presence. I could no longer conceive how ever I had been able to think that Martin was her exact image in features. There was some resemblance, perhaps; yes, that was evident. But neither in the *tout ensemble*, nor in individual features, did Martin and Anna resemble each other, except in regard to what might be ascribed to chance.

This discovery went to my heart with the

full force of conviction, and gave me such relief as I had never before experienced in Hell. Never yet had I felt the equal of that repose I found for the moment in the mire of that river's bank.

I continued my examination of her. It was now more of a pleasure than a pain to me. Every fresh observation strengthened my conviction. Certainly Martin did not resemble her, at least but very little! But, who was she like? All at once it struck me that she was most extraordinarily like some one or other. But who was that other?

My tranquillity lasted but a short time; again I became hot and cold, and terribly agitated. I began to ponder and meditate, and was at once in the very midst of all my torture again. With a sudden shock it struck my heart; it was not Martin that was like Anna, but Martin's sweetheart; that fair young girl on whom I had cast my last amatory glance in the world; whom I had picked up from the street; but who had preferred the street with Martin to a palace with me.

It was impossible to mistake; the longer I looked the more express did the resemblance become. And Martin's secret, which he said would clear up everything between us,

was quite satisfactorily explained, on the supposition that the wench was my daughter, as the boy was my son. Truly, had it only come to light that the girl was my daughter, everything would have been clear between us!

A fresh horror seized me! Well might I shudder! Again it stood out before me, that the sins of the fathers were visited upon the children. Now I understood why that young girl had excited my dullening passions.

It was the unhallowed lust of youth, awakened by a resemblance that had started to life once more.

The girl was my daughter; there could scarcely be a doubt of it. How nearly had I been committing a crime against nature, at which even depravity itself would stand aghast! My own daughter!

Gracious God! what abominable consequences can sin drag along in its train!

I writhed in agony. I could bear it no longer. There she sat before me; dark, staring fixedly, devoid of all sympathy, like inexorable fate. She held my life in her hand, as I once had held hers. But two words from her lips, and I should be freed from the murdering agony of this uncertainty.

But she had not even a word for me. Her will was no longer mine. Once she had fol-

lowed after me, wherever I went, though it was to her downfall. Now she flies from me; even if I could direct her on the road to Heaven, I believe she would not follow me.

When I look back on my past life, it is an impenetrable gloom. But numberless lights gleam forth from the darkness, great and small, from heaven and from earth. I am thinking now mostly of the first, the numerous tokens in my sinful life of God's fatherly compassion. Like star after star on the dark sky, they peer forth from my doleful meditations.

I see now how near God was to me, and how time after time He strove to bring me to my senses, to warn me, to move me, to draw me to Himself by His benefactions.

More gentle, more patient, more long-suffering love cannot be imagined than that which God has shown to wretched me. But that same love (take heed to this, all of you who still have your eyes open) He shows to all men, though under widely diverse conditions.

But I regarded it not, or else threw it quickly aside; therefore death has become to me the darkness of perdition, and I have been cast out, where alone, by the memory of time

misused and love abused, is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

It is true, occasionally I allowed myself to be really moved. God's hand from on high was too plain, and the blessing it conferred too great to escape my notice. For the moment I could have kissed, could have wept over that blessed hand. My heart was soft, and stirred to the depths. If my penitence was feeble, still my good intentions were firm. And I thought I never, never could forget how good God had been towards me.

But I did forget it altogether; forgot purposes, emotions, benefactions, even God Himself. It was not thoughtlessness alone; I wished to forget. So thoroughly did I forget it, that when I found myself in distress and pain once more, it never occurred to me to whom I should apply for help and compassion.

Truly, let me acknowledge it as loudly as I can, the fault does not rest with God, that I did not come out of all the perils of my earthly life as a saved, as a happy soul.

That story about the Good Shepherd who has such love towards the flock, that He is ready to give even his own life for it, is as touching as it is simple. And each separate sheep is as dear to Him as if it were His whole flock. When one sheep goes astray, He leaves

all the rest to seek after the lost one ; and He does not cease to seek for it till He has found it. And when He has found His sheep again, He carries it back in His arms, rejoicing.

So, when I look back on the time that is past, it is just as if one had sought after me my whole life through, with all the aching grief of love. And I was often, ah, how often found ! But again and again, I tore myself away to pursue my own wild ways. So at last I could not but be irretrievably lost.

I scarcely had known a day's illness since I had grown up to man's estate ; to the very last my constitution seemed as if it would bid defiance to infirmity of all kinds. The worst indisposition I ever experienced was a weakness of the eyes, which necessitated my keeping indoors for some weeks, in a nearly dark room. It was a wearisome time for me ; not only tedious, but I might say an awful time. It gave me a very good idea of what the solitary system in prison must be. For there is no greater torture than to be alone when the heart is full of evil remembrances. Night and day seemed to be one ; and it was not only that the darkness appeared to be ever growing thicker, but that I was ever sinking deeper and deeper into it. And yet this darkness was but a trifle to that in which I am now

sitting. At that time I thought it so awful ; but it was nothing, literally nothing ! Darkness like that would be actual light and bliss now.

I had plenty of friends ; but still my visitors were few and far between. It was not every one who cared to come and sit by me in the dark, and exert himself to amuse me in my cross, peevish humour.

So there I sat, for the most part quite alone ; and yet not alone, for we were two. My other better self sat by my side. It was long since I had had opportunity to converse with it. It had been, properly speaking, altogether absent from me. Now it was sitting by me ; no, not by me, but opposite, face to face with me. The darkness was no impediment to us two. I cannot say that I was particularly pleased with my company ; but I was forced to bear it. It had only come there to reproach me ; so we jangled away, and never had peace.

In every individual there are naturally two such persons, and they cannot be made one, brothers though they be, twins in fact, resembling Castor and Pollux. It is not because there is any lack of natural affection between them ; such affection is at hand, but it only finds expression under quarreling and strife. This duality in mankind is a characteristic

mark of sin ; could it be done away with, then sin and its unhappy consequences would exist no longer. And that it can be done away with, I learnt even in those dark days.

As I said, we jangled and squabbled together, and there was no possibility of our coming to a mutual understanding. There is nothing more obstinate or more persistent than this better self. It would not give up one iota, but demanded of me that I should give up everything ; that I should deny myself, even to the death, in order to be one with it. I neither could, nor would do so. And yet I could have done it.

But I soon discovered that there were not two, but three persons present. Besides us two that were always quarreling, was a third one, who acted as mediator between us, and was full of love and earnestness. I could gainsay my own self ; but against him I had naught to say. I felt that he had right on his side in everything. I felt, too, that through him I could come to an understanding with myself, be at one with myself, and begin a new and a better existence. I knew who the mediator was, not a mediator between me and myself alone, but between me and God. It was God's own Son, once born in the flesh.

I was quite in His power. In that dark

corner, whence there was no possibility of escape, the Good Shepherd had at length found His poor stray lamb. Already He was holding it in His arms. But it was only He that willed; I, in truth, would not will. It was only with reluctance that I submitted to His embrace; there was something in me that was but watching for a fitting opportunity to escape.

And this opportunity was not long wanting; it never is, when the fool in us is ever on the look out to seize it. The Evil One, which had by no means yet given up its claim to me, only needed to make a very trifling discovery.

He discovered a game which could be played in the dark. He gave one of my friends the credit of the invention, and brought him to me. Naturally I received him with open arms, not only as a friend, but as a deliverer. What a splendid invention was this game of hazard! doubly interesting, because it could be played, yes, could only be played properly in the dark!

And we set to work to play, I and my friend;—no, I and the Evil Friend. My opponent was in reality no less a person than the Prince of Darkness himself. And the stakes! I did not know it then, but I know it now. The stakes were nothing less than my eternal welfare! Naturally I was the loser!

One blessed evening hour on the waves of the Mediterranean comes so vividly to my recollection. The day had been oppressively sultry; but towards evening a gentle breeze sprung up from the north-west. The air once more became exhilarating, and poured in fresh balmy streams over the deck. The waves once more gently rippled, and a light froth appeared on their crests; the dolphins gambolled around the vessel.

The sun had just set in all its splendour; and the western horizon was refulgent with streaks of red and gold over the Ionian Sea.

The twilight would come on apace, and the glorious spectacle would soon fade. It was but for a moment, but the loveliness of it was beyond description. On the left of us was the enchanting Isle of Cythera, over which the mountain ranges of Maina reared their lofty peaks, and dark shadows, with imposing solemnity. There formerly was Sparta. On the right of us lay Crete, and Mount Ida, whose snow-capped summit, glittering in the roseate hues of evening, seemed to pierce the clouds.

At last Lili and I were for a while alone. It was seldom our good fortune to have the deck to ourselves. Her loveliness, her gentle, graceful bearing had enthralled every soul on board, and every one who could gain admit-

tance to her neglected no opportunity of paying her homage. This circumstance led me to make a very remarkable discovery with respect to myself. I had a strong tendency towards jealousy, but I could not be jealous of Lili, though she was the dearest I had ever known on earth. Impatient, vexed I might be at all this intrusion, which Lili submitted to with such good humour, but I never felt jealous for a single moment.

We were alone, then. But those precious moments seemed as if they would pass away unprofited by. Lili was sitting leaning back, with her hands pressed on her bosom, perfectly still, while, with an absent look in her eyes, she was gazing on the Morean coast. My attention was, as it were, divided between the imposing panorama around me and a little object not less imposing: it was a ringlet of dark hair, which the wind was toying with in the most loving manner on her rounded shoulder. But this pleasant survey was suddenly interrupted. It seemed to me as if Lili were drawing her breath irregularly and heavily, and when I looked in her face there was a striking expression there. It was not only as if a paleness were contending with a rosy blush for the ascendancy, but as if a struggle full of anxieties was going on within.

I forcibly repressed my own anxiety, and asked, "What is the matter, Lili?"

"I do not know," she answered, after a deep-drawn breath. "My heart all at once became so uneasy, and I felt myself so oppressed. But do not worry yourself, my friend; I am better now."

And she really seemed to be better. I took hold of her hand, and we sat together some time in silence. The night was coming on apace; it was a heavenly night. The coasts were fading away from view like grey shadows; only a faint gleam here and there still lingered on Ida's summit. The stars broke out in myriads on the dark sky, and were reflected on the sea below.

"What are you thinking of my own Lili?" I asked, as I gently pressed her warm hand.

"Do you wish to know, Otto?" she answered softly, as she laid her other hand involuntarily in mine; "then I will tell you a little story which has just occurred to me."

And Lili proceeded to tell it.

"There was once a poor man, to whom his pious parents had only bequeathed a good, honourable name, and a devout, God-loving heart—a great legacy in itself; but of little value in the world's eyes.

“At first things went on very well, but presently they began to turn out badly. First, he lost his hardly-gotten gains. People pointed at him and said: ‘Look at the wretched man!’

“‘Not wretched yet,’ he answered; ‘God is my consolation!’

“But misfortunes continued to follow him. Most of his friends deserted him, and the few who did remain betrayed him. He was cheated, slandered, universally misjudged.

“People shook their heads at him and said: ‘You must confess now that you are a miserable person?’

“‘Not yet,’ he answered gently, and his voice trembled; ‘God is my comfort.’

“Next he suffered the greatest, the severest of all: he lost his beloved wife, and shortly after his only child. In his old days he stood quite alone in the world, poor and utterly helpless.

“Then people shrugged their shoulders and said: ‘It is of no use for you to deny it any longer; you are certainly a very miserable man.’

“‘No, my friends, not yet,’ he answered, as he forced his tears back; ‘God is my comfort!’

“So people found there was nothing to be

got out of him, and knew no better than to give him the nickname, 'Paul Comfort.'

"But he never became really miserable. The very last words he ever spoke were, 'God is my comfort!'

"So he went to Heaven."

Did she love me? This question is constantly recurring to me. Very likely you will think that it must be a matter of indifference to me now; but it is not. Here there is nothing; we must content ourselves with what has been; and unless I greatly deceive myself it would be an indescribable comfort to me to know that I had been loved by her. But in Hell there is no such thing as comfort of any sort; that is just the desperate thing about it. It will never be clear to me; I shall never know.

I have gone over and over again our relationship to each other from beginning to end. At one time I think it is so, at another I think the reverse; it is and it remains doubtful. In itself it is by no means probable that she would ever have come to love me, whom she had known from her very childhood, and whom she would look on rather as a brother, an elder brother. Our ages, too, were an obstacle; I was a great deal older than she was. Neither

was it likely that one whose gaze had been turned upwards to Heaven from her earliest years would ever have bound her soul to such a clod of earth as I was. And then, moreover, she died so young, in the happy-age of ideality.

But spite of all this, when I call to mind the tenderness with which she clung to me ; her unrivalled attachment in small things as well as in great ; the gentle but powerful glow which often streamed forth from her being in her relations with me ; next, when I reflect that I was almost the only young man she had ever known, and how much I was to her, I may say everything ; how I was the uncontrolled master of her being and destiny, it appears to me to be impossible but that she must have loved me ; not with my love, naturally not with that, but with her own, with that divine unimpassioned love which had so often moved me in my intercourse with her, but which never could find an abiding dwelling-place in my heart.

Did she then love me ? What answer shall I give ? This much is certain, she never learned to love any else. From the pains of jealousy I was at least free, and am so still.

What I never can forget is, that on her dying bed she evidently had something on her

mind ; something which resembled a woman's full, holy love. She struggled to get it forth ; it played, as it were, on her lips ; but she could not utter it. It was not ripe yet ; it died with her, as the unborn child dies with its mother. What was it that made her heart so glowing warm, so zealous to the last ? What was it, then, if it was not love ?

Did she love me, then ? Yes, or no ? Ah ! it is in vain that I perplex myself with this question. I must admit I cannot say. Never in her whole life had she any secret from me. If she did love me, then, it was her only secret, a secret quite as much from herself as from me, and she took it with her to the grave.

Those last days I spent in Bethlehem stand before me as a dream, though sleep scarce once visited my eyelids.

After numberless difficulties we had been directed to a little, lonely house in a corner within the cloister wall. It was an uncomfortable room, but we had brought many conveniences with us, and with money procured still more. There she lay on her last couch ; in the subdued light that fell from a high, but narrow bow-window, pale as a lily, lovely even in death, to the very last moment. And

as her pallor increased, her dark eyes became more brilliant. It was just as if the star that once had stood over Bethlehem was shining through them. It was not that wan pallor which death paints on the sunken, stiffened features; it was that pure, transparent paleness, to which no better name than glorification can be given, which bears witness against death more than do even the rosiest cheeks. She had not time to waste away; she died in the fulness and beauty of youthfulness.

Night succeeded day, and day succeeded night, without our noticing it; time was for us no more. The convent bells rung almost incessantly in our ears. They caused me an indescribable pain; it was as if they were insisting on my giving up my loved one's life. But otherwise no one troubled themselves about us. The Prior sent us some consecrated palms. I was grateful for them, for they seemed to please Lili. I fastened them over the head of the bed.

Her strength rapidly failed, and she became more and more restless. She wanted constantly to be moved, and to be turned in her bed. She had not strength enough to do it herself; so I had to take her in my arms as a little child. Ah! it was the first time since she had grown up, that I had ever presumed thus to embrace

her. But when I thus took her in my arms; and lifted her up, she would involuntarily throw her arms round my neck. Oh, how loving! But how late this love came! I could not restrain my tears; they trickled down upon her face.

"My friend," she said, and she smiled like an angel on me—that sweet, unearthly smile still makes my heart throb. "My friend, you are weeping, while I am smiling. I feel no pain, and soon I shall be perfectly happy. It is only this restlessness which disquiets me. I long—and it seems to me now as if I have longed all my life long—after that eternal home with God, where there is joy and peace without end. I shall soon be there, without you, Otto, but only for a brief while. We shall meet again, never more to part."

Her voice had nearly failed her, and her breathing was difficult. Her words fell like spirit whispers on my ear, at broken and irregular intervals.

"My friend," she resumed, after a lengthened pause, "oh, how sweet and pleasant it has been to me to call you thus! Otto, I may tell you now, a great, yes, the greatest part of my life have I lived in this name. But there was a depth in it which I was never able to exhaust, how ever kind I was towards you. I felt so

often that you deserved a greater, a better love than I had to offer you. And yet I have passed my happiest hours in pondering over the full import of that precious name. There always seemed to me to be something which was lacking to make my happiness complete. But I never found it out. But yonder with God, Otto, we shall lack nothing more, when we call each other by that lovely name, 'My friend! my friend!'"

At last her restlessness increased to such a degree, that, no matter what her position, she could find no rest on her couch. I had then to take her up in my arms, and sit with her upon the edge of the bed.. With her head resting on my bosom, she found rest at last.

I sat there with her, hour after hour. God alone knew my suffering. She did not stir, her eyes were closed; I could only tell that she was still alive by her irregular breathing, and by her feeble, intermittent pulse. I sat with her hand in mine (alas, it was already cold!), and observed the beating of her pulse with breathless anxiety. It was as if my very life depended on that beating. Oh, what a deplorable, quivering life! Her hand grew ever colder and colder; it became more difficult to distinguish the beating of her pulse. Soon, soon, it must all be over!

And it was soon ! All at once she opened her eyes wide, and with an unearthly, beaming glance, she caught my darkened gaze, and whispered the words :

“ My friend ! ”

It was rather a gasp than a whisper. But I heard and understood it. Quite beside myself, I pressed a hallowed kiss upon her brow.

Once more she moved her lips ; but no sound reached my ears. As if by inspiration it recurred to my memory what she once had told me about the sign of the cross, and that it had always given her peace. Involuntarily I made the sign of the cross upon her breast.

A smile lightened up her face, a reflected ray of glory from the kingdom of Heaven. It was but a glimmer. Her eyes closed, a slight tremor, and she was gone. It was a corpse now that rested in my arms.

Then my composure was at an end ; she it was who, as if by supernatural means, had alone sustained me. I became raging mad with grief. But of that let me be silent !

CHAPTER XXV.

It is long since I wrote you a letter. Many a time have I taken my pen in hand, but have let it fall again. I could not describe to you what I have undergone; and yet my heart is so heavy, so oppressed. I must speak out; I must make you my *confidant*, as far as I can.

Listen then to what I have to say in my distress :

Quickly the awful moment was approaching, ever more quickly. The abyss was gulping down the murky gloom in deep-drawn mouthfuls. A blush, like the morning dawn, broke forth in the infinite distance yonder side the pit. I knew that there lay the land of bliss. Quickly the brilliancy spread higher and higher, in colours of an unknown, nameless loveliness. Only in dreams, or from some sweet music, can men at times form an idea of such magnificence.

Everything was resting in Hell, or rather everything was centred on one thought, as far as Hell extended. Millions of eager beings

were turning their steps in the same direction. Some stood stiff, like pillars of salt, and stared into the heightening glow; others had sunk down on their knees, while others again lay upon their faces; but there were also those who defiantly turned away. I was standing, trembling nervously among the first, and had forgotten everything else around me. In a moment it was as if a curtain or covering was rent asunder, and all-powerful streams of light poured through it, as if the whole universe were in flames. A smothered sigh sounded through Hell from the millions of millions of lost souls; and I was conscious of nothing more. As if stricken by lightning, I fell on my face to the ground.

How long I lay thus, dazzled and stunned, I do not know; only some few fleeting moments, perhaps. When I had come to myself again, the light had become steady and soft; little by little I weaned myself to it, and was able to look into it without being blinded by the glare. For a long while I saw nothing; but as I continued to stare, convinced that there must be something to see, a whole world of infinity dawned upon my sight, in inconceivable, incredible magnificence. Yes, I must say incredible, though I did not doubt it for a moment. I knew that it was the land of bliss;

that it was Paradise that was expanding itself to my gaze. First it seemed as if islands and extensive coasts rose up from that sea of light, bathed in soft and brilliant colours; but little by little these dispersed parts united into one, and formed a whole of such enormous extent, that even the world itself seemed to be but a tiny spot in comparison to them. But great though this new world was, it formed but one single place, a delightful, charming garden, blessed beyond all comprehension and bounds. Even the loveliest places on earth are, comparatively, but as dwellings of misery. More I cannot say. I must be an angel if I could.

Ah, you know what I am!—God be praised, not a devil. Only a poor wretched soul, that sees destruction before it.

Fascinated, and at the same time cut to the heart, I gazed into Paradise, over thousands and thousands of miles. Yes, wondrous as the spectacle was, equally marvellous were the powers of my vision. My spirit seemed to roam through all the celestial regions, and dwell on every spot. Nothing escaped my ecstatic and awakened senses. I felt the mild balmy breezes, the gentle rustling of the trees, the rippling of fountains, as my spirit paused a moment in its flight, or passed them by. The luxuriant fruit; every tiny flower; aye,

every dewdrop on the grass, attracted my admiration. I saw, heard, and felt. There was music everywhere in this heavenly place. No drop of water fell, not a leaf stirred, not a flower opened its petals, without an accompanying and melodious sound ; and all these sweet notes formed one ravishing harmony. As yet I could not see a single living being, though shouts of joy, and songs of triumph, sounded on my ear from all parts : nature and spirit united in chanting a hymn of blissfulness. This infinite bliss, this perfect happiness and peace which everything breathed forth, went to my heart with a thousand transports ; alas ! only to cause me a thousand remorseful stings.

At this hour I first rightly understood what it is to long. How my soul stretched itself out over one expanse of a thousand miles after the other ! It was unutterably painful. Have you ever heard speak of the bed of Procrustes ? If so, you can form some idea of my agony. But I could not do else than long ; I could not but stretch out my hands after my lost salvation. Eden lay before me ; I was there, and yet I was not there. Out of all this splendour there was not a beam of light, not a drop of water, no, not so much as a flower or a leaf for me ! Oh, thou everlast-

ing Mercy, only one drop of water—only a single tear!

But where, then, were the countless crowds of blessed spirits? As yet I had not seen a single one. Eden's garden seemed as empty as on that day when Adam and Eve were driven out of it.

I felt myself all at once possessed with a burning regret. Oh! my beloved, never-to-be-forgotten ones, whither are ye gone, if ye are not here? My soul seemed to cry after them. First, my thoughts fell upon Aunt Betty. Why first on her I cannot explain: there was yet another who stood in much closer relationship to my soul.

But at the same moment I saw her before me. Unconsciously I stretched out my arms, and rushed forward. Ah! there is a longer space between torment and Paradise than there is between Hell and the world; and, what is more, there is a yawning gulf between them, so that none can pass from one side to the other.

But I saw her before me, my dear Aunt Betty, as plainly as if there had been but an arm's length between us. It was her to the life, and yet how changed! She was transfigured into an everlasting youthfulness and loveliness. Her beauty was as free from stain and as perfect as the white shining garment

in which she was clothed. Under the gentle influence of happy thoughts, she was wandering along a luxuriant path, on which not a stone was to be found against which she could strike her foot. A heavenly peace was spread over her beloved face. The smile that played about her eyes, and over her lips, revealed to me what her feelings were, and how happy she was.

She had overcome everything, yes, everything! Not so much as a shadow of sorrow or of woe remained behind.

I could have wept bitterly at this moment. Ah, how often could I not have done so? But my heart remained arid and burning hot, spite of all its emotion; the fount of blessing was quite dried up. All that my Aunt Betty had been to me, all her love, and the sacrifices she had made, came into my thoughts. And now I first thoroughly understood her.

For—and this is the strangest of all—not only did I see her before me, but I could see into her inmost thoughts. Everything that she had gone through in spirit, all that had occurred, all her sufferings and struggles, lay open before me, as an account that has been balanced.

Yes, now I understood her! Once, when she was young, my father had stood by her side in some severe trial; in his love she

had found an asylum in a desert world. She could never forget it. In return for this she had determined to sacrifice to him the remainder of her life. That was the key to her life, as far as I had learnt to know it. And she had remained faithful to her purpose to the very end. But it was not my father alone that had benefited by these sacrifices, but numberless others. Among these others I came nearest to him.

My father; Lili! Simultaneously my thoughts reverted to these dear ones; and at the same instant they emerged out of the shady grove, and appeared before me.

At the sight of Lili I was nearly beside myself. My senses were in a whirl; I became giddy. It was as if my eyesight were failing me. But it did not fail, for these beloved forms appeared to my gaze with perfect distinctness and calmness. Not a feature, either without or from within, escaped my notice. I could with reason say, that I had never known, never seen them properly till this hour.

Oh, Lili! Even when in the world, she had always appeared to me to wear a crown of imperishable beauty. But Lili now, and Lili then, bore the same relation to each other as day does to night. Such a perfect, beaming,

transparent loveliness has never been vouchsafed to mortal eye to behold, nor to human fantasy to picture. Holy, holy! it sounded over to me from each separate feature, from each bend of her form, from the crown on her brow to the palm-bough in her hand, from every fold in her white garment. When she raised her beaming eyes upwards, their glances met mine, and they flickered and glowed like a flame in the wind. And that angelic, hallowed smile which accompanied them seemed to be intended for me alone.

But it was mere illusion! None from yonder side can see over here. God be thanked for it! She was near, quite near to me, as I longed in the spirit and stretched across all boundaries. But I was far, far off from her. For she too surely longed, but not over the abyss, not in the direction of Hell's torments!

But I was not far from her thoughts, from her heart. Oh, woe, woe! Shall I howl in despair, or sing for joy? Now I could read in her righteous heart, as in an open book. And I read—written there in clear characters it stood—that with all her soul she really had loved me. She had, unknown to herself, loved me with a deep, holy, maidenly love. She loved me still. She wore me in her heart; I was never out of her thoughts; she

longed so inwardly and yet so painlessly after me. It was on my side, on this side of the yawning pit, that all the pain was.

What shall I say? Despair is a customary, an every-day occurrence. It is like an ever-burning lamp within me. Now it flares up, now it flickers down, but never is extinguished. At this moment æther was poured into my lamp; enchantment came to despair, you may imagine with what effect. High aloft blazed up the flame, and spread over my wretched being. I dissolved, as it were, in flames!

“See—see—how much you have lost!” was the incessant cry within my breast. Can you wonder if I scarce noticed my father, my pious, good father, by her side; that I cannot recall one of the soft, gentle words my loved ones interchanged with each other? Possibly I might have heard my name mentioned with ineffable love. But I saw and heard nothing more after I had seen Lili, and had discovered that she loved me. I was a defenceless prey to despair. In vain I struggled, if only to catch another glimpse of her! Quite beside myself, I sank to the ground.

CHAPTER XXVI.

SINCE you last heard from me, and that is a long time ago, I have been on a long and marvellous journey.

It is impossible to speak with any certainty as to the distances one accomplishes, or the speed with which one travels. I cannot but suppose that both are inconceivably great. But the fact is that time and space are but illusions to us, however real their existence may be. This, however, is not peculiar to time and space alone ; it may be said of everything else. Everything depends upon the conception. Therefore unity is one of the accidental rarities of Hell ; and what is termed harmony in the world and elsewhere is not to be found here. It is quite beside the question if a number of souls under the influence of some strong instinctive impulse do unite here and there, in the pursuit of one common object or idea. For freedom is essential to unity ; but these souls act merely under necessity ; they

do what they are obliged to do; and if this instinctive impulse could be removed they would be mutually as much at variance as the others.

Enough then to say that I was compelled to undertake this journey. When I feel myself utterly miserable I find a kind of desperate pleasure in darting off like an arrow through infinite, trackless space, as if I were blind, without any aim or object.

My only aim is to hurry wildly along; yes, exactly as if I were blind, for I respect no obstacles. I go right through the thickest walls; the most crowded mob; through houses, churches, palaces; yes, even through human beings and animals if they get in my way. Of course it creates some confusion; but people are quite used to that sort of thing here. They know that it is nothing but a desperate soul, and they quickly recover their composure as if nothing had occurred.

"How can you have a liking for it?" perhaps you exclaim.

Yes, you may well ask! I do not know myself how I can like it. Every one here has his natural place, and it is best for him to remain in it. I have mine; and, as you know, I lead what one might very nearly call the steady, respectable life of a citizen. But now and

then an ecstasy comes over me, and then farewell to all respectability and to all good old habits. I am off on a wilder flight than ever wild goose set out in the world.

What really lies at the bottom of these fits of ecstasy? Despair, you say, utter despair. Yes, naturally! But in despair, a natural feeling of constraint that we must fly from one's self, or at all events find stupefaction, makes itself felt.

But I can neither do the one nor the other. In the world, the attempt may at times succeed, but never, never here. When then I have again and again learnt this useless experience, I suddenly leave off and look around me, and frequently find myself in very strange places.

But the most wonderful place of all is the very one from which I have just come. As a fool I went thither, as a fool I returned. Horror drove me thither, and horror drove me home; and now I am sitting here again, as you may have remarked, more than half-deranged.

There is a passage to a definite goal, which doubtless every soul in Hell has undertaken at least once. This journey might be termed a pilgrimage. Whether it has its origin in a peculiar irresistible impulse that is common to

all, or whether it may simply be ascribed to the marvellous attractive influence that the horrible exercises over souls, all must away, sooner or later. You know what a mob is wont to congregate at an execution in the world! It is wonderful. But would it not be much more wonderful still if a person felt himself irresistibly impelled to attend his own execution? Well, something similar to this takes place here.

As you are aware, even without my telling you (for doubtless my information has been but imperfect), there is an immense abyss between the place of torment and Paradise. Immense I call it; I might also add fearful, if this word, coined only for earthly objects, were not too weak to pourtray the horrors of this pit. It is the Devil's corner. Do you understand now? An eternal fire is burning down in its depths, prepared for the Devil and his angels.

How far off is this pit? I can say nothing to that, except that it lies at the furthest end of Hell.

And how near can one come to it? At a distance even of a hundred miles a feeling of deathly giddiness comes on, and still one is drawn nearer and nearer to it.

And what is the width of the pit? When the splendid brilliancy of Paradise is beheld

one can readily see across it ; but I am much mistaken if even the great ocean in the world would not fail in comparison with it.

From this abyss that terrible darkness pours forth that gradually takes the light away from us, and swallows it again in turn. Then it becomes lighter and lighter, till the splendour of Paradise again bursts forth triumphantly. But I do not really know why I am telling you this. What I actually had to say is merely this, that now the awful moment with all its horrors has passed, and I have still strength left to despair. The light sensibly diminishes ; night is coming on once more.

But we were at the pit. You expect, perhaps, that I am going to describe the place to you. You might as well ask me to give you a description of Paradise, as of the horrors of this pit. I should lose my senses altogether ; I should rave, however sober I may be, were I to attempt to do so.

Just as little may you expect to hear what one's feelings are on the brink of this place of perdition. Yet stay !

In order to satisfy your curiosity in a very slight way, let me tell you that more than one rich man stands by the pit, and sees the poor man on yonder side in Abraham's bosom, and stretches forth his arms as he begs for a drop of water. For he is in bitter torments !

That first rich man in the Gospel, it is said, has been released!

And I, too, have begged, with all the energy of despair, but no one has heard me. Fain would I have plunged into the pit, among that howling devil's crew below. What power held me back, and what power led me away, I do not know.

What if there were still a compassionate God watching over me?

It was my second pilgrimage to the country near the yawning pit. I am sitting here now, and thinking how ever I could have found any delight in making it. But here we have no control over our whims and passions. I shudder, I shudder! The whim might seize me a third time!

I see I have written in order to satisfy you in some measure. It was almost a promise, and promises, especially small ones, which it has not been difficult to keep, I always considered to have something sacred about them. I must then conquer my own feelings, and tell you a little more yet. But I warn you beforehand, the revelations I have to make are not adapted for weak souls, that esteemed a good, peaceful slumber beyond everything else in the world.

When I was rushing back in heedless alarm from the pit, as if I had escaped from Satan

and his angels, how I do not know, I was nearly rushing into the arms of an individual who was coming towards me. But could that shapeless form, with its crushed, torn body, and hideously-contorted features, be a human being? Yes, indeed it was, and one readily recognised from the description that has been given of it. The name of this person was Judas Iscariot.

Around his neck he wears a noose, that has been broken asunder; in his hand he bears the thirty pieces of silver. The noose chafes him terribly round the neck; the pieces of money burn his hand. Often he throws them away from him, but they always return. Each time they make a little round patch on the world, and then lie once more, bloody as they are, in his clenched hand. Thereupon one hears him moan:

“What is that to us? See thou to that!” A fruitless repentance, which in reality is no repentance, occupies his entire conscience, and he has only one aim, namely, to come behind some person or other, and hang around his neck.

What his intention thereby is, is not quite clear. Some think that he really means hanging himself; that he will do over again, and do better, what he failed to do in the world. It is, doubtless, a misconception! But certainly

it has never appeared what terrible thing would happen were he to succeed in hanging himself round another person's neck ; but, at all events, I do not think it could be Judas who would stand in danger of being strangled. But, in the opinion of others, the matter is supposed to resolve itself into this, that Judas is simply searching for some Christian person who can restore him the kiss he once gave his Lord and Master, and rid him of the thirty pieces of silver. But of course he can find no one. As may well be imagined, there is no one who will wait for his embrace and kiss. All fly from him with unmentionable horror, and, fortunately, it is not difficult to escape from him.

I, too, fled away, but not far, for I was obliged to stop. A fearful sight presented itself ! Again I asked myself, " Can that, too, be a human being ? "

Yes, indeed it was, wasted away to the very bones. A living skeleton, not the less a phenomenon here than it would be in the world. I learnt who it was at a later period. It was that fellow among the servants of the High Priest, that smote God's Son on the mouth.

His history is shortly as follows :

The hand wherewith he smote the Lord began immediately to shrivel up and wither

away. And so he continued to wither slowly away, inch by inch, from his outer parts to his heart. At last there was nothing left but skin and deformed bones. And thus he wandered about, an object of terror to all persons. He felt how death was slowly, but surely, stealing upon him. It was a long, long time ere it reached his heart. His life became one continuous dread of death. Each day, as it came, he feared would be his last. But day succeeded day, year followed upon year, and still there was no end.

But an end came at last, not to his suffering, but to his earthly life. He died and went to Hell. Here he suffers the same agony of soul, inasmuch as he is possessed by the horrible fancy that he is still ever dwindling and withering away. He asks everybody, just as he used to do in the world, whether they can see any alteration in him.

Under this idea he lives and breathes, and walks quietly about in order to spare his diminishing strength. We do not fear him; one cannot but shudder at him. Whenever he speaks, it is generally to ask that anxious, breathless question. Only now and then he whispers to himself,

“*Why smotest thou me?*” and looks down at his withered right hand.

The other day I happened to tread upon a piece of newspaper. I took it up and read :

“TRY YOUR FORTUNE !

“ For twelve coppers, a prize of 400 dollars may be won !”

It was one of the customary baits that are thrown out to the inexperienced and the covetous, and which, after having served their purpose, naturally come to Hell.

But I have made it a rule never to throw away a piece of paper like this, without first looking to see what is on the opposite side. The wrong side, which, naturally out of Hell, is the right one, frequently contains the best part ; something which was never intended to be read in Hell, but which the mysterious and necessary connection between right and wrong has strangely brought along with it.

The wrong side of the piece of paper in question contained a little advertisement that ran as follows :

“ Bridal wreaths and funeral garlands constantly in stock in large variety.

“ Names and elegant farewells well and cheaply prepared.”

O, what serious, painful considerations these innocent lines gave rise to !

Bridal wreaths and funeral garlands by the

side of each other! Yes, unfortunately it is, but quite correct. There are, in fact, only but some few quivering breaths, some few moments of toil, struggling and pain, between them. They lie so close beside each other, that in our attempts to lay hold of the one we often grasp the other; we seat ourselves down to weave a bridal wreath, and it becomes a funeral garland in our hands.

Many a mother and father bring up the child of their heart for the bridal wreath; but the funeral garland comes first, and adorns the head of their precious one. She lies there with the white roses encircling her virgin temples. But 'tis no bridal chaplet! She needs not to blush; she is as pale as the roses that deck her. The bridal chaplet is laid up in store for her in Heaven—in so far as she has learnt to know the bridegroom of the soul, God's only begotten Son—the unfading crown of eternal life. And many a woman would fain rather have a funeral garland on her head than a bridal wreath. Rather become pale under that, than burn under this! Rather death for a bridegroom, than a husband who is totally undeserving of love.

And these names which are so excellently and so cheaply executed! How ever well they be done, they will soon moulder away, and none will be able to read them. Ah! it is but too

often the case—dead persons are soon forgotten. The dead have no longer any rights. The world goes on unmoved, undisturbed in its accustomed way; life has its claims to which the demands of death must humbly give way. Life is the rich man in the Gospel, who fared sumptuously every day. Death is the poor man, that lies in misery at the rich man's door, and must thankfully receive the crumbs that fall from his table. There are exceptions it is true, great exceptions. But in general, the dead man is remembered but a little while; his name is handed over to oblivion, and the names, living names, crowd into the warm, tender heart. How then can there be room there for the dead? No, there is no longer any room for a dead name in the heart. It moulders away on some mouldering church wall, and no one can any longer decipher it; or it wafts sorrowfully to and fro on the grave in the cold wintry winds, as a relic that cannot be recognised from the tender days of love.

And those beautiful farewells that can be had so cheap! Ah, one could weep bitterly at their cheapness!

Farewell! farewell! In the heart of the dead, broken though it be, it will continue to echo, if not with anguish, at least with regret; while

its sound will quickly die away in the hearts of the living. Alas, it was too cheap; it cost so very little! Some fine day, maybe, a total stranger comes to the heart you loved best on earth, and which you never, never will forget, and says to it, "Good day, good day;" and that tender farewell is forgotten altogether. It flutters only as an unhappy shred over the grave.

Oh! but why was it to be got so cheaply? And yet it was so beautiful as it sounded on the lips and to the eye; so lovely, so touching! Where was the fault? Ah, there was no soul in it! It was but a breath from the lungs; the heart had not any share in it. And yet the sorrowing mourner believed it, perhaps. But it is the truth—there was no soul in it. It had stealthily shrunk away into the very innermost recess, there to wait for better and happier times. And they came, and were hailed with joy; the times of loyal forgetfulness.

Then the soul once more raised its head from the depths, with fresh aspirations and yearnings, craving to live amongst the living, and not with the dead. Decay had long since destroyed and wafted away that lovely farewell, which was so beautifully made, and cost so little. There was none to sigh over the

sunken grave now, save the mournful night wind.

Of late everything has merged into one great overwhelming pain. What have I not suffered? Now it appears as if it would disperse, as the saying is. Among others there is one sign, namely, that evil recollections, with remorse of all kinds, once more begin to flow in upon me.

You must not jump at the conclusion that hereafter I shall only be troubled with small griefs. These, indeed, are not worth noticing. My existence is, as it were, divided between many great pains. Among these it is quite conceivable that there may be one which is great even among the greatest. In a forest there may be many large trees, and yet one can tower far above all the others. Well, I have, as it were, been nailed to this great tree in the forest of late. What heed did I give to the other trees? what heed did I pay to the swarms of gnats? Yes, to continue the simile, evil reminiscences are like gnats, that swarm about the open places in the wood.

A beautiful picture, is it not? The pains of Hell compared to a summer day's trip through the wood. Well, then, if you retain this picture, do so! Your friend is wandering

through the wood, and the worst complaint he has to make is——

The gnats. Sting after sting!

I had once taken quite a young man into my service. He was a sort of heirloom from Aunt Betty; that is, it was for her sake I took him. But, God forgive me! how I treated him! I do not know how it was, but I took a dislike to him from the very first. You know it often is so in the world, and one does not attach much weight to that sort of thing. My new servant was, perhaps, a little deficient, but was certainly possessed of a most excellent will. But nothing he could do pleased me. He could not even stand upright, or walk to my mind. Early and late I nagged at him; and I verily believe found a degree of satisfaction in doing so. Every one of the sarcastic, insolent words that I used to him come into my thoughts now, and again and again I can see his sorrowful face. Naturally, he could not bear himself with me, and had to see after another place, which I was good enough to procure for him. But it was not a very encouraging beginning for a poor fellow who would make his way in the world. And he deserved better. After he had left the house more than one or two little touching traits of affection

and fidelity in the poor young fellow who had been so badly treated came to light.

It is but a trifling matter, you see; but it has its sting, and the smart pains.

In town there was a little garden to my house. A neighbour's house fronted it on one side with a blind wall; and yet not quite blind, for some distance down in it there was a window. It seemed like the eye of the house, and I conceived the idea that this eye did not lose sight of me. It was a mere fancy, for behind the window sat a poor sempstress, who had quite enough to do with her work, without spying after me. Of course she looked down into the garden every now and then; and in the morning and evening she even ventured to open her window. There was certainly no harm in this; but for all that I took offence at it. In short, in an angry moment I availed myself of my legal rights, and had some planks nailed up before the offending window.

But this right of mine was a huge wrong. My little garden was one of the greatest blessings that had fallen to this poor girl's lot. There were flowers in it, and she was passionately fond of flowers. There were shrubs in it, and the green colour was so good for her weak eyes. At the back of the garden

was a summer-house formed by lime trees, where a tribe of little birds used to take refuge, and she was so fond of birds, and so pleased to hear their chirping. By placing these planks up in front of the window I had not only deprived her of all these treats, but even of the pure air, aye, of the light itself which was essential to her work.

Before long it struck me that I had been guilty of something which bore some resemblance to cruelty. I let it run round my head and my heart for some time; at last, when I had got a philanthropic scheme duly prepared, I went into my neighbour's. But it was too late. The poor girl had been obliged to leave a house which the joys and sorrows of fifteen years had hallowed and endeared to her.

Another trifle! Not in itself, perhaps, but trifling when compared with the many evil deeds of my life. But, believe me, it scorches my heart now!

I was out riding. In the middle of a village I pulled up, for I wanted to see a man, and was not quite certain as to where he lived. It was midday, and extremely hot; there was not a soul to be seen in the village who could hold my horse except a pretty young peasant girl, who came out from some door. I

beckoned to her, and she came, half archly, half coyly; and without further difficulty held my horse while I went on my errand.

When I returned, a peculiarly pretty and interesting sight was awaiting me. My horse had grown impatient, and the young girl, who could scarcely manage it, was evidently in great perplexity. In her struggles with the refractory animal, the movements of her plump, well-made figure appeared to advantage; there was such a mixture of anxiety and vexation in her pretty face that I felt quite enchanted, and instead of coming forward to help her out of the critical position into which I had brought her, I hid up, so as to be able to watch the *piquant* scene at my leisure. It was a *quasi* pendant to the horse tamers on Monte Cavallo in Rome. The style somewhat lower, perhaps. But here it was the living, fresh beauty of youth; real flesh and blood.

There was no danger! The horse was by no means restive; on the contrary, he was a great pet. There was only one trick he had; but the young lass did not know how to treat it. It was all play. For instance, he would throw up his neck as if about to rear; and in the present case nearly lifted the girl's slim and supple form off the ground. But she kept

a firm hold, and would not give in. It was all play, too, that he snapped now at her neckerchief, now at her hat; and oh, dear! away flew the kerchief, exposing her full white neck and bosom to my gaze. Not long after her back hair fell out from under her hat, and rolled in golden waves over her back and shoulders! Her distress increased. Her cheeks glowed, and an unsteady fire sparkled from her eyes, not very far removed from tears. Her bosom heaved irregularly up and down, as she strove to quiet the animal with breathless words. And as she held on to the bridle it swung her first here and now there. Standing on tiptoe, and with uplifted arms, she was perforce obliged to execute the freest and most graceful movements. I thought I had never seen prettier steps executed than she now made with her neat little feet from under her short waving skirt. It was extremely selfish of me, I grant; but I could not tear myself away from the contemplation of such natural charms.

But matters ended abruptly!

All at once the girl got sight of me, and I was obliged to come forth from my hiding-place. Had she have let go her hold of my horse she would have served me right, I allow. But she kept a firm hold of it till I could take the bridle

in my hand. But that tearful look which she cast upon me; that mingled expression of vexation, injured modesty, and anger! It makes me shrink under it, even now. But before I sprang into the saddle, I placed a piece of money in her hand. She let it fall to the ground, and turned away without even looking to see whether I was following after her.

Now, this again is only a trifling affair! I had treated the girl ill, true; but then she had sustained no harm in any way. On the contrary, I think that this little adventure most probably taught her an excellent lesson, namely, to guard against coxcombs from town.

But for all that, reminiscences such as these must come home to me here, and they will make themselves heard. The law of existence is perfect justice; and this law pervades the world, Hell, and the kingdom of Heaven too. Everything, if it only have a shadow of evil in it, will come home to me some time or other, and demand restitution, and claim an equivalent retribution, unless by God's mercy it be intercepted on the road. Evil in the world insists on a corresponding measure of suffering in Hell.

Cannot you hear how the gnats are swarming and buzzing round me?

There is one tree in the forest beneath which I must stop again and again, and give vent to my deep-drawn sighs. It bears the fruits of a mis-spent life, and they seem to pour down upon me. How I might have enjoyed myself! How much I could have done! How happy I might have been!

But I would not.

While I walked in the light I was blind; and blindly I fell into my grave.

In darkness I see now for the first time!

CHAPTER XXVII.

As I roam through the Holy Land in my memory, the feelings of a pilgrim whose contrite heart is reminded at each place of the Saviour, but nowhere finds forgiveness of sins, come over me. When I actually undertook this journey, peace was offered to me at every place and at every hour; but so taken up was I with vain thoughts, that I paid little heed to it. One of God's saints walked by my side, and had an almost uncontrolled sway over me. Her faith, her piety, breathed incessantly on my soul; often and often I felt myself moved, touched, inwardly exalted; more than once my sinful heart was well nigh giving itself up entirely before the Saviour's feet; her Saviour, who might also be my Saviour too.

But at the critical moment my self-will became alarmed, and, like a flame from Hell, burned within; once more was I blinded, and saw the Saviour no more. I saw only a lovely

young creature by my side, on whom all my anticipations were centred, who was as good as my own already, but over whom I should have to fight the hardest fight of all—the fight with death.

Galilee, beauteous land! I know nothing more enchanting than the contrast between the wild, dark wilderness of Judea, and the bright, fruitful land of Galilee. And I know of no more glorious spot in Galilee than Mount Tabor. I can see it before my eyes. Boldly, and quite alone, it raises up its oblong, conical head from the plain, while its steep sides turn towards all the quarters of the heavens. Up to its very summit it is clothed with wood and thickets, and its evergreen oaks and pine trees vie with each other in magnificence. The whole mountain seems to be strewn with aromatic plants; there is a freshness in the landscape which I have never experienced in any other part of the world.

Only from the south is it accessible. The road winds up the mountain side in graceful bends, at each turn unfolding a new and enchanting picture to the eye. The atmosphere becomes palpably purer and more bracing, and yet more balmy; one seems to breathe in a totally new existence after quitting the

parched-up plain below. It is a long but excellent road ; much longer, but at the same time far more lovely, than one could have imagined. And then at last, when the summit is reached, one is astonished to find a plateau fully three miles in circumference, so immense and so lofty is the mountain. This plateau is covered with the loveliest carpeting of grass and with noble trees ; while the atmosphere one inhales is almost similar to that on the peaks of the high Alps. The approach to the plain is through a decayed arched gateway towards the west, one of the numberless relics from ancient times. Ruined walls and towers, grottos, and cisterns, ranged in a large circumference, show plainly that here there once had been an entrenched camp, if not a town. In truth, it must be as secure as it is lovely to build and to live here, for a more charming spot could scarce be found in the whole world. Little wonder that Peter thought "it good to be here," and would fain have built lasting dwellings ! According to tradition, Tabor is the Mount of the Transfiguration.

The shades of evening were coming on as we approached the mount. It was early in the month of March ; but the day had been burning hot. How refreshing it was, as we

wended our way up the mountain, in the cool, balmy shade. It seemed like Paradise! Yet, as for Lili, she had Paradise within her wherever she went.

A little before sunset we reached the summit.

Nothing can be compared to the impression conveyed to the mind, as we suddenly emerged on the open plateau, the prospect from which was unlimited on all sides. We became mute under its powerful influence. The whole of Galilee, yes, even the greatest portion of the Holy Land, lay unfolded to our gaze.

I cast my eyes on Lili; for I had long been in the habit of receiving my best impressions through her. The setting sun threw a warm glow over her delicate features, which seemed transfigured in silent ravishment. There was a loveliness in them greater than earth could impart. Never had I felt this to be the case so strongly or so vividly as at this hour. All the beauty of the landscape, which perhaps was without its equal in the whole world, lay far and wide around me; and yet it was as nothing when compared with that which her beloved face revealed to me.

Oh, my friend, do not be vexed at my dwelling so long on all this! Foolish, it is true; but still natural, and I cannot do other-

wise. It is a part of my torment to recall to memory the happy moments of my life.

To the north we could see far over the heights of Galilee; to the lofty snowy summits of Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon, and to the parts around Damascus. Directly beneath our feet, to the north, west, and south, lay the small towns of Cana, Nazareth, and Nain, with all their hallowed and heart-stirring reminiscences. Towards the west we had the rich, lovely plain of Esdrelon, Mount Carmel, and the wide sea, in which the sun had just sunk down. The little stream Kison wound like a silver stripe through the valley, and guided the vision to the holy mountain springing up from the sea. Towards the east the fair lake of Genesareth, glittering in the evening sun, at once catches the eye. The little town of Tiberias lies on its shores, now, of course, in ruins; Capernaum is not far distant. On the further side is the wide desert where the Lord fed those many thousands. To the south the lonely mount of Hermon first arrests the eye, and next the mountains of Samaria, but they cannot keep it prisoner long. It roves far out to the region round about Jericho and the mountain of the Forty Days, where God's Son fasted and was tempted of Satan; yes, even Jerusalem itself gleams forth at favour-

able moments. It crosses the river Jordan to Bethabara, where John baptized ; it exchanges glances with the Dead Sea, to reach Mount Nebo in the land of Moab, where Moses died, and then loses itself in the boundless desert of Arabia. Truly with such a spectacle, glorious beyond human conception, it is not difficult to believe that Tabor was the Mount of the Transfiguration !

The whole scene stands before me with wonderful accuracy and clearness. I could give it an apparent existence if I would.

The sun sank ; nay, it fell, as it were, into the sea, flame-coloured ; and darkness at once began to set in. But our people, meanwhile, had not been idle. A sheltered spot had been found, and a tent for Lili and my mother had already been pitched ; for we had arranged to pass the night on the mountain. The animals had been unsaddled, hobbled, and set at liberty ; a fire composed of the fragrant cedar wood was kindled, and the preparations for our simple evening meal were made. All were busily employed, except the Turks, our original escort, who looked on in indolent, voluptuous repose, as they smoked their first evening pipes.

This evening labour, whether in the west or east, in the north or south, has always had a great charm for me ! - But that evening,

on the mountain of Galilee, was one of the last perfectly happy evenings I have experienced in the world; yes, perhaps it was the very last.

When darkness had quite fallen over us—and, in speaking of darkness, the thought of those myriads of stars that twinkled overhead, not as at home from the blue canopy of Heaven that the eye could pierce, but from a profound impenetrable gloom, that made them shine with ten times their former brilliancy, comes to my mind—when darkness had quite fallen over us we lighted several fires, and arranged the necessary watches. It was not only done for form's sake; for nowhere in the Holy Land is the traveller secure against the Bedouins. But here it was not difficult to make one's self secure. We were in a natural fortress; the mountain was ours.

The lamp was lighted in the tent, within which we passed the last hours of evening in familiar and pleasant talk. Lili read aloud to us the account of the Saviour's transfiguration on the mountain. Nothing was so calculated to calm the tumult in my breast as her sweet voice; in my serious moods it was quite enough to awaken a feeling of religion within me. But it was only as a fleeting puff of wind on some close summer day. My soul soon lay low like

a butterfly that flutters its wings in the dust. It was so at this hour.

"How do you find yourself, Lili?" I asked, as she gave me her hand, and bid me good night.

"I cannot say how well," she answered, with a happy smile. "I feel so happy up here, as if I never could make up my mind to descend again."

I noticed by the pressure of her hand, which still lingered in mine, and by the glance from her eyes, that she had something to say to me yet. I bent down, and she whispered in my ear:

"Do not forget to pray before you go to sleep. The Saviour prayed here for you!"

Another refreshing puff of wind; once more the butterfly fluttered aloft. Moved at heart I left her.

My couch was laid at the entrance to the tent. I wrapped myself up in my burnouse, and laid me down to rest. And yet not to sleep, for first I must pray. But since childhood I had never prayed from the heart. Of late I had often tried to do so; but had always felt that something was wanting; ah! not something only, but the most important thing of all,—that from which prayer must arise and take wing towards Heaven. This evening,

as I set myself to collect my thoughts for prayer, they wandered in all directions, and my soul again became restless and uneasy. I could not pray; it was useless that I strove to do so. Neither could I sleep; for first I had to pray. All was still within the tent; but outside, peace was nowhere to be found. I gazed up into the heavens; the stars seemed so close as if I could have grasped them with my hand. I felt as if the arch of Heaven were crushing me; the boundlessness of the firmament almost terrified me. The strange and varied sounds of night worked on my imagination and excited me. Now it was a wild boar that dashed through the thicket; now it was the distant howl of a jackal from the plain below; or it was one of the Bedouins or Turks talking to himself in strange tones in his slumber.

It was midnight. My watch ticked as loudly in my pocket as any church bell; at least, it appeared so to me. Restlessly I turned once more upon my bed, and fastened my gaze on the dying embers of one of the night fires. While I thus lay still, it was exactly as if Lili's voice were again sounding in my ear, reading to me the Saviour's transfiguration upon the mountain. I saw the Saviour before me, standing between Moses and Elias

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in God-like majesty. Then my eyes closed. I had prayed, unknown to myself; my soul had prayed, independently of the will and nature of the flesh. I fell asleep, and slumbered sweetly until break of day.

Dawn was stealing over the heights of Ashtoreth, on the other side of the Lake of Tiberias, as I approached the northern slope. I was standing near some old masonry, buried in deep thought. Presently I noticed that some one was close by me. It was Lili, who had followed on my track without being noticed, and who now gently laid her arm on mine.

United in this way we stood for a few moments in silence; it appeared to me a sacred hour. I believe I threw my arm around her waist. I say, I believe; for if I did, I did it without knowing it.

The sun arose in all his majesty; his first beams shone on our faces, and made the tops and ridges of Mount Carmel glow with fire. It was in the west chiefly that the splendour of the morning displayed itself. Here the wide sea lay extended, and every tiny wave threw back its flash, as day triumphantly broke.

"Otto, it is good to be here!" said Lili, gently, and at the same moment forgot that

she had spoken. Silently I drew my burnous closer round her, for a cold wind was blowing over the mountain.

The valley below was still hidden by mist and fog. But soon a movement might be observed in the gauze-like curtain; it lifted, and spread itself out. Then through a rent in it, a cupola and some white walls peered forth from the depths below. Little by little the rent became wider, and soon the whole of a small town was disclosed to view, like a revelation from another world.

“Nazareth!” exclaimed Lili, with joyful surprise. “Lowly, lowly Nazareth! Here the ends of the world are gathered together: Nazareth and Tabor. Born in the very dust, and under the meanest conditions, He was still the Son of God, and heir to the whole power and majesty of God.”

She said only “He,” and I did not ask “Who?” It was impossible to mistake. She had but one firm and steadfast thought in the world. To live implies a great deal; therefore not one of the nobler interests of life was strange to her. But life itself, life in her—it was He, and only He.

A last look, and we turned to retrace our steps.

“Here He was transfigured!” she resumed,
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as she stood still and gazed around her. "It was not because He had already accomplished His course, and performed the works of His heavenly Father. The heaviest of all was still in store for Him; the deepest humiliation, the bitterest suffering — Gethsemane, Gabbatha, Golgotha. But here on the mountain for some few moments He tasted beforehand the eternal, perfect majesty that was awaiting Him in His Father's house, and went on His way strengthened and refreshed.

"Otto, is it not also so with us in the world, with all those who through Him have been made children of God? We have all of us a shorter or a longer road of trial before us; but for a passing moment we may realize beforehand eternal life, perfect liberty and joy. Without this, existence would be unbearable to many souls. My soul rejoices within me! In each breath I draw I enjoy the fullness of life. Honour be to Him! Some such moments have also been vouchsafed to us here on the mountain!"

Was it Lili speaking? It was not the first time I had been startled at the freeness and scope of her remarks. It was astonishing to see how developed her whole being had become of late. But at the same time it was a source of anxiety; for it seemed exactly as

if she were hastening to have done with this world.

"Do you know, Otto," she continued, as she took my arm, "I have a feeling as if I could never again find myself at ease on the level of the earth. It is a very happy feeling, but at the same time there is something inexpressibly painful in it. I do not say that I would give a year of my life; but I would give much, much, to be able to prolong our stay here on the mountain. A day or two more—what do you say Otto, dear Otto?"

"Do you think it would do you so much good, Lili?" I asked mournfully.

"Yes, indeed; already I feel much better. I breathe so freely, and my heart is so quiet and calm."

"Well, then, talk to mother about it. My will is your will, my own Lili!"

Meanwhile all was astir upon the mountain. A busy, though quiet movement was taking place in our camp. Fresh fires were being lighted. Some were preparing coffee, others were baking cakes of wheat, barley, or maize, on the heated stones; others, again, were watering the horses, or cleaning their arms. The Turks alone did nothing. Morning devotions over, they had lighted their first pipes, and were being waited on as if they

had been gentlemen born. But, farther off, a new life was stirring. Far and near, flocks of capering goats spread themselves over the surface of the mountain. It was a lively, charming scene!

My mother made no objections to Lili's plan. She had evinced of late (shall I call it) an admirable degree of self-denial, or merely of compliance; I think it was the latter. A life so devoid of all forms and rules certainly could not be pleasant to her. But she was too prudent not to see how much was at stake, and that for a while she must let matters take their own course. Lili was no less in her thoughts than in mine.

We remained, therefore, and did not repent it. Our free camp life, on the most glorious spot, raised as it were above the world, with a prospect over a whole land, and that land the Holy Land; with the purest air, with a nature as rich, as fresh, and as odoriferous as in the Garden of Eden, with a repose more perfect than I have ever before experienced; all these were real blessings to us all. Lili felt no palpitations at the heart, and was free from anxiety; her cheeks retained the same delicate hue. Her pulse (and how often her dear hand lay in mine!) no longer had those intermittent throbs, now bounding violently only to become

well nigh still, but beat evenly and calmly. I was not far from believing in the miraculous power of the mountain; and well nigh gave up all my sorrowful presentiments. I became cheerful as in days of old, and contributed not a little to enhance the happiness of those hours.

Later in the forenoon there came several troops of pilgrims, mingled crowds of nearly every nation. The poor, the sick, and the miserable composed the rearmost troop. Our encampment lay rather remote from the actual sacred spot, and thus we fortunately escaped the throng. It was a sight more than piteous, but Lili did not shun it. On the contrary, her heart burned within her; she must afford help and comfort everywhere wherever she was able, and I had to help her. And the help and the comfort she gave was rich indeed; partly in money, food, and medicines; partly in sympathising words and looks. What love beamed from her dark, brilliant eyes! How lovely she looked in her semi-eastern attire, as she quietly moved about among the unhappy people, all of whom could understand her so well, though her language was strange to them! There were rude natures among them; but her mission was sacred, and she herself sacred, even in the eyes of the most miserable. It was a significant circumstance

that linen for bandages was the article most sought after in this fair of mercy ; it was more precious even than gold. But, unfortunately, our stock of this article was soon used up ; and when Lili at last laid hands on the turban that she wore, I was forced to interfere. A nod and an arch smile gave me to know that she had come to her senses again. That was my share in the distribution of alms !

Towards evening I received a visit from the chief of the tribe, who had made himself responsible for our security from Nazareth to the mountains of Samaria. He had been hunting on the mountain, and was coming now with a stately retinue to salute me, and present me with a wild boar he had killed. Of course I had to make him a handsome present in return, in addition to those he had received already. But the great honour and civility he showed me were well worth this sacrifice. The worst of it was, that he deprived me of those priceless evening hours which I had thought to pass in idyllic tranquillity with Lili and my mother. I was obliged now to make preparations for a banquet to the best of my ability, of which the wild boar formed the smallest part ; and to wear away the time in a not very lively, but not the less flowery conversation of compli-

ments with the chief, aided by an interpreter, who, in the most tedious way conceivable, unravelled for us the thread of our conversation. Still I had one consolation ; it seemed to amuse Lili, who, wrapped in her veil, witnessed the whole scene at some little distance. The meal was the best part of it ; and I believe I showed myself to be an excellent host. The Emir appeared highly gratified when he finally took leave, in order to seek night quarters, with a delicacy for which I felt grateful to him, lower down on the mountain, and thus left us sole masters of the high plateau——

But, my friend, let me break off my narrative abruptly ! I notice that I am once more on the road to lose myself. There is no sound sense in imparting such communications from Hell. You may look for the continuation in Chateaubriand, or Lamartine if you please. As far as I am concerned, I am a fool, even after death.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ADVENTURES of all kinds are the order of the day here. But like everything else in Hell, there is no pith or power in them.

Vain is the endeavour to get anything out of them. Even the most exciting incidents leave only an indescribable feeling of vapidty and weariness behind.

The other day a young woman, trembling all over, threw herself into my arms in a lonely spot; not from any attraction towards me, but from fear of some one else. She was persecuted, and the nervousness peculiar to her sex had quite overcome her, the little fool.

On the one side, she had no cause to be alarmed, and on the other, I could not be of any use whatever to her. But such occurrences are common here; for the most part we move in scenes handed down from the upper world. So it was very natural that this delicate womanly creature I held in my arms, had met with a serious fright, and had taken refuge in my respectability.

When she had come to herself a little I asked kindly who it was that had persecuted her.

She raised her dove-like eyes, and it seemed as if she were going to have a fresh alarm, so retiring and bashful was she. Meanwhile she answered :

“He is always following me. I do not know his name; but it is he who is always asking after Beatrice. He believed that I was Beatrice.”

I knew at once whom she meant. He is one of the public characters of Hell, if I may use the expression. This description is all awry, as, indeed, are all the ideas we have brought with us from the world. For in Hell all persons are public characters, though not one of them is so in the same sense as that which is attached to it in the world. By a public character I only mean that every one knows him in all the regions of Hell, points at him, makes grimaces at him.

“Where is Beatrice? has any one seen Beatrice?” These questions are incessantly on his lips; they are his whole thoughts, his fixed idea. “Where is Beatrice?” He is convinced that she must be in Hell, for he says: . . . but let me be silent on these abominations! And he searches after her with a burning, ravenous eagerness that I have never seen equalled in this place. But his search

is vain. If ever he did find her I am convinced that something would happen that would create a sensation even here. In other respects he is one of the most repulsive individuals I have ever known; and that is saying a great deal here. He looks like a complication of all the vices of the world; as if he were consumed to the very core of the heart, without any other soul than the wild, fiery passion that never gives him rest. And then the frightful wounds which he exposes to view. From any one of these certain death gapes out. It is a natural consequence that such an one as he belongs to the riff-raff of Hell. Neither was it strange that this chaste, modest young creature was terrified at him. Only one of those impure, burning looks would be enough to chase innocence itself into a mouse-hole. In default of a mouse-hole she had taken refuge in my arms.

“You are not Beatrice, then?” I asked.

“No!” she answered, with a gentle look, “I am Emily!”

We did not then make each other's acquaintance any further; but it was plain enough that there would be no impediment to its continuation.

As I left her I could not but indulge in some very peculiar reflections: “How had a

creature like this Emily ever come into the pains of Hell? She was the express image of beautiful naïve womanhood. Certainly, there is no security in good looks; on the contrary, it is generally the best looking people that go to Hell. But all the more security should there be in naïveness. That modest, timid look could not possibly be feigned; and in all respects, her person evinced an expression of a pure nature. She was delicate and graceful, not only in form and feature, but in all her manners. It was as if her soul was beaming through her in perfect innocence. And she was so young, almost a child. Possibly she might have been nineteen or twenty years old; but I am inclined to think she was younger than that. In the world, childlike innocence is of great repute, and with good reason: but how good the reason is, is best seen in Hell. Of a childlike nature, properly speaking, there is a total want here. In woman especially this childlike innocence can long maintain itself, spite of the temptations of the world and the flesh. Emily appeared to have been one of these choice and happy natures. She seemed to have emerged from the period of childhood pure and untainted, without even so much as a stain of the world upon her. But how was it she had come to Hell? It can

only be explained by that frightful theory, that mankind is by nature evil, and that from within the impulse of evil develops itself, how ever fair and noble be the disposition, how ever free it may be from the wicked world.

I met her again shortly afterwards. She did not see me, so I had a good opportunity of watching her closely. She was sitting in a retired spot, quietly but actively occupied with herself; and presented a spectacle as attractive as it was remarkable. Her dress was as simple as a nun's, perfectly white; and its modest folds were gathered round her light slim figure. Perfectly white from head to foot, without so much as a shadow of colour, she afforded a striking contrast to the gloomy darkness that prevailed around. There was only one thing lacking in her soft features for one to have pronounced her a perfect beauty, and that was, peace; she had it not, and consequently could not have it.

Her delicate hands were busied with something in her bosom: it was a necklace of pearls I found that engrossed her attention. She counted the pearls, first forwards, then backwards, pausing each time when she came to the middle. Whereupon she let the necklace fall back into her bosom, and commenced wringing her hands in despair. Pain and

anguish were visibly expressed on her lovely face. I thought I could even see tears in her large languishing eyes; but this, of course, was only imagination.

I made my presence known, and seated myself beside her.

"Are you the white lady?" I asked.

Before even I had said the words, it occurred to me how foolish my question was. There are such numbers of white ladies; in Germany alone there are half a score.

"I do not know what you mean," she answered: "I am Emily Fleming."

"Fleming and Sparkman, Glasgow, Trent-bury Square?" I blurted out. It was a very old and well-known firm.

With a deep sigh, she nodded her head in assent.

What did she mean? did she belong to the firm?

While I was thinking over it, she had fastened the pearl necklace round her neck. She was sitting lost in herself, with her hands folded—I say, folded, for I should remark *en passant*, that no one can really fold their hands here. What use would it be?

Evidently she was suffering a great deal.

"Poor child!" I said; "you seem to be very unhappy."

"Yes, I am," she answered; "I have suffered a loss I shall never repair."

"What have you lost, then, my poor Emily?"

"Alas, a pearl!" she answered, wringing her hands.

Only a pearl! Truly, that was a little thing to come to Hell for. And yet there are pearls of priceless value. As far as I can remember there was once a merchant who sold all that he possessed, to find such a perfect pearl that he had met with on his road.

"Perhaps the pearl may yet be found," I remarked good-naturedly. It was only an idle remark, and I was far from attaching any importance to it.

"Do you think so?" she asked with animation; "and yet I have sought for it a long while."

Something hovered before me, to the effect that he who seeks will surely find; but as I could not quite get it on my tongue's end, I gave it up, and confined my remarks to the words: "If you have sought for it so long, perhaps you are very near finding it."

With these lucky words I found the way to her heart, and we became quite intimate with each other. On another occasion, not long after, she told me her history. It was evident that it was a great struggle for her to do so;

but she met with great support in that powerful instinct that dwells in us all to make a light breast. Here everything comes to light.

"You alluded to the house of Fleming and Sparkman," she began. "Possibly you may have known the present head of the firm. My history dates far, far longer back. Let me see, it was his grandfather's great-great-grandfather. Yes, just seven generations back. Ah! how long it is ago!

"At sixteen years old I became the wife of Robert Fleming. As a happy bride he introduced me into his ancient, magnificent house. On our wedding day he presented me with a costly pearl necklace, worth a whole fortune in itself alone. But before he fastened it round my neck he went through the row of pearls with remarkable earnestness of manner, and gave me an explanation of them, which I can still remember word for word.

" 'This large blue pearl in the middle,' he said, — 'it is really no pearl, but a gem,—signifies your matrimonial faith. This blood-red pearl on the right of it, your love. And this transparent white pearl on the left, your innocence. The smaller pearls on the right and left signify the other virtues of the married state. And finally, the band which

keeps the pearls together is womanly chastity and honour.'

"Thus he spoke, and then fastened the necklace round my neck. At that time his words made no particular impression upon me; for all my thoughts were centred on the costly *parure*. But at a later period they have all the more occupied my thoughts. See, here is the necklace. The pearls are all there except one, the middle one. But this one which is missing has been my destruction.

"Did I love him? I scarcely know what answer to make. Perhaps I did not love him as I might have loved another. But so much I know, that for the first years of my married life I was a happy wife; happy in my husband, happy in the possession of two lovely children, which were the fruit of our union.

"Then a friend of my husband's came to the house; a false friend, as false as he was handsome. I do not know how it was, but he blinded me completely.

"Did I love him? I cannot expressly say that I did. I was attached to my husband in a very different way than I was to him. But my husband had never been able to awaken that feeling of intoxication within me which he awakened. A strange sensation of voluptuousness stole over me when in his presence;

I seemed to become giddy. What was it? madness or enchantment? Yet no! it lay rather in my blood, in my veins, than in my head and heart. It resembled a poison most. But it was a poison that was infinitely sweet. In vain I strove against its effects. No, I did not strive; for I well knew that that which I felt was of the Evil One. But I neither would nor could suppress it, wretched woman that I was!

“One day, when we were alone together in the drawing-room, he forgot himself so far as to place his arm around my waist. I cannot say I made much resistance. I could not; I felt exactly as if I must faint. Involuntarily, however, I must have made some effort, during which my necklace broke, and the pearls rolled on all sides over the floor. The same instant I was myself again. He, too, had suddenly become sober. As if an invisible hand were placed between us, we hurried away from each other.

“Yes, we had both come to our senses, to our most sober senses. I besought him to go away, and he obeyed. Then I set myself to search for the pearls. I found them all except one; the blue one, my matrimonial fidelity. How anxiously I searched that day, and many succeeding ones. But it was nowhere to

be found. For a long time I kept it a secret from my husband. None of the domestics were permitted to set foot in the unhappy apartment. And I searched and searched, with an ever-increasing agony of mind. But it was all in vain; and at last I had to give it up. The pearl had vanished as if by witchcraft; and at length the loss was discovered by my husband. It was a frightful moment. He said but little, but thought all the more. From that day forth a dark shadow rested over his face, which said far more severely than words can express, 'Virtue and honour are broken; your fidelity is lost. What can you be to me after this?'

"Conscience, too, seemed to have been powerfully awakened in this false friend, for from that time forth he kept at a respectable distance from me. What his feelings were I cannot say; but in my heart a fire was kindled which could never more be extinguished. Sin had led my heart captive; the evil passion would not yield. It was in vain that I strove against it. I was compelled to follow him with my eyes, to occupy my thoughts with him. Even in my dreams he usurped them. I could not get that moment out of my thoughts, when my fall had been so

terribly near. Though I inwardly shuddered at the thought, still it was my pleasure to dwell on the scene; and each time it afforded fresh nourishment to my passions. I felt myself hopelessly entangled in the net of the Evil One. And yet—yet my heart had been pure till I learnt to know him; evil had not only been strange to me, but had been far away from my thoughts. Oh, how suddenly can innocence vanish away! My very being was infected. There was only One who could have cleansed me—He who would not condemn the adulterous woman. But Him I did not seek, blinded as I was by another.

“I was taken ill, but even then the evil passion did not quit me; it burned like a fever in my veins. In my delirium I must have betrayed everything to my husband. I died. My last impression in the world was that moment in the drawing-room. I departed, and when I opened my eyes once more I was in the torments of Hell. It could not have been otherwise!”

After a lengthened pause Emily continued her narrative:—

“Have you experienced what it is to revisit the earth? Well, then, you do not know the agonizing necessity we have to submit to here. I could have no rest. I must

return to search after my lost pearl. And now I have been searching for it two centuries; it was, it is not to be found.

“What I felt as I revisited my old home as an outlawed spirit cannot be described. But a wonderful dread was the prevailing feeling of my heart. I trembled as one who is walking along forbidden paths. Wherever I came I brought discomfort with me; but I myself was ill at ease.

“Not a corner in the great old house did I leave unransacked; up and down, in the passages and in the rooms, in the garret, in the cellar, everywhere I sought for my lost pearl. And everywhere I brought terror with me; but all the dismay I caused returned to fill my own heart. Every one who ever has inhabited that house has heard speak of the lady with the lamp. To meet me is to feel the horrors of death. Only one or two aged domestics, who have become grey in the service of the house, can stand their ground against me. One of these has seen me so often, is so used to my apparition, that he passes boldly by me with a silent prayer. We go each of us on our business through the silent passages, only with this difference, that he is on the path of right, I, on the contrary, on the road of evil. It does my poor beating heart such good to

meet an old acquaintance in that deserted house. It seems like a taste, like the perfume of home. I have seen him busy in the house at all ages of his life. His time will soon be over now ; his hair is grey, his gait tottering. He is the only one who is not frightened of me ; and he has no reason to be so. I can do him just as little harm as he can do me. I only search for my pearl. ‘Oh, my pearl ! where shall I find thee ?’ is the one thought of my soul.

“I busy myself in the best bedroom. It once was mine. There stood our bridal bed ; there my children’s cradles ; and there, too, was my death-bed. In every corner I find bitter recollections, but no pearl !

“I go through the drawing-room. It was here in an unhallowed moment that I became lost to myself, and fell. Here my pearl disappeared ; so here I search the most diligently, with an eagerness I cannot describe. But the pearl may have got elsewhere ; some one may have found it ; so I search through the whole house. Every drawer is ransacked, from the lady’s jewel-case to the servant’s work-box. It is the women especially that I suspect.

“I flit through the long corridors. There my apparition is dreaded most. Among these is one that has been used as a picture-gallery

for centuries. Here is my husband's portrait, he who was so shamefully wronged. I dare not cast my eye upon it. Still I am riveted whole hours before it on the same spot. I think, 'May there not be some token of forgiveness and reconciliation on his face?' Of course there cannot; I know it, though I am unable to raise my eyes to it.

"In this gallery I give free vent to my shame and despair. Here, too, is my own picture. I am represented in bridal attire. They said I was pretty once, yes, very pretty; but I seem to myself to be frightful. And a terrible feeling comes over me as often as I pause longer than a moment by this picture of mine. It seems just as if the picture were myself, and I but the empty likeness.

"Here, too, are the portraits of my children. My heart swells within me. Once they have lain upon my bosom; but, alas! they will not acknowledge me; they know of no mother, no maternal love. They regard me with strange looks. As an outcast I must cower beneath their glance, and disappear.

"I have seen one generation succeed another in that honoured house. They all belonged to me, but I was not only a stranger but a terror to them all.

"The old house is known far and wide, and

is as respected as it is known. Everybody knows that it is haunted. Often have the family thought of quitting it, but have always given up their purpose as impossible. The ancient mercantile firm is so intimately associated with that old house that it can endure no separation.

“In a new house, they say, the business would fall to the ground; so they remain there, and I roam about, the only weak spirit amongst many strong. Moreover, they know the whole history of the ghost; they know every part and parcel of it. It is whispered as a tradition in all the corners of that old, dark house. They know that I am the ancestress of the race, and what was the cause of my misfortune. Under the pressure of this thousand-tongued tradition its posterity has grown so cold and precise that no band, to say nothing of a band of pearls, will ever again be broken by any of the family.

“That unhallowed pearl necklace is still in the family’s possession; but the fairest, the costliest pearl is wanting. In its place they have hung a cross of jewels: it signifies faith, they say. But it is not the faith I lost, at all events.

“The necklace is handed down as an heirloom from one lady of the house to another;

and each of them beholds me, if not sooner, at all events on one of the last nights she has to live, when I come by the bedside and ask, 'Where is my pearl?'

"In the early branches of the family no answer was given to my question. At their speechless dismay I awoke, terrified myself, and fled trembling away. But of late they have adopted the plan of laying the dying person's hand upon a bible; and now the answer ever sounds, even though unaccompanied by words: 'It is found! Here is the pearl!' It is not my pearl; but you understand me, my friend. Oh, alas! had I found that hidden pearl, on which the dying person's hand rests so securely, the loss of that other would have been quite retrieved. But without my pearl I was, and am, and shall be, in agony and in torments."

Such was her tale. I looked into her fair face, which, even under the influence of such violent excitement, still retained its bewitching loveliness, still bore about it traces of child-like innocence and goodness. I thought to myself, but did not give vent to my thoughts, that if any but her own self had told me this history of an impure passion in so pure a vessel, I would not have believed it.

But what is passion? Its first beginning is

only a thought or an idea, that, as it were, by chance assails the heart. No one knows whence it comes ; it is like the driving cloud. An electric spark emanates from the contact, and the spark ignites, and a burning fire sweeps through your whole frame. Your nerves thrill ; your blood boils. The former may, perhaps, regain their wonted balance ; but the burning restlessness in your blood will, perhaps, never again settle down. The truth is, that if you even had oceans of blood in you, one single drop of poison is sufficient to taint the whole. It is no longer a thought, an idea ; it is a being, a strange, wild, unruly being, that has come to life in you. The evil passion has got the mastery of you, how ever innocent you may be, or seem to have been, before. And how far it will carry you, no soul in the wide world can tell.

Therefore, watch your thoughts, if you will escape the pains of Hell ! Watch the first beginning of sin ! It seems so little, and so weak, but it gets so strong, and so dangerous. But should the poison, the sweet poison, already have entered your heart, there is but one antidote. It is a bitter, purifying repentance.

And whence can you obtain it ? I cannot tell you that.

CHAPTER XXIX.

OFTEN some melody or other runs in my head, and I cannot get quit of it. I am obliged to hum it over and over again after a spirit fashion; it thrills incessantly in my ears, and through my soul. It is not I who have caught up the air, but the air that has caught up me, and persecutes me in the most cruel manner.

It will be difficult for you to imagine how painful such a melody may be to me. The more stirring, the more enchanting it is, the greater the pain that ensues, the deeper does it cut my heart and soul. It is not only that different recollections are thereby brought to life. Certainly it causes pain, and the sweeter the reminiscence, the deeper the grief; but I am so used to it, that it is the least part of it. The melody in and by itself comprehends an essence which is in grating disharmony with existence in Hell. Music and Hell, you may conceive what it is! A combination enough to drive a soul raging mad. For this pining longing after

something infinitely beautiful ; these deep, happy regrets ; these ravishing presentiments of future glory ; all this has now lost its object and its truthfulness ; an incurable breach has taken place with that higher world, so rich in promise, against whose shores the waves of the music gently ripple. Never till now have I properly understood these harmonies, and this is just the painful thing about it. They give me, as it were, tidings of Paradise and its blessedness, and I find myself in Hell and in torments.

Was it not Sychem or Sychar, between the mountains of Samaria, where we once halted at noonday, and enjoyed our *siesta* beneath the shadow of the palm trees ? Yes, and the inhabitants of the country still asserted that a ruined cistern, which even yet gave water, was the well of the patriarch Jacob. Never have I seen grass look fresher, or vegetation more luxuriant, than on this blessed spot between lofty, nearly barren, mountains. The valley was filled with gardens after gardens of fig trees, mulberries, pomegranates, grapes, sycamores, and date trees. Here and there a hedge of cactus and aloes ; while on the slopes were groves of olive trees, and still higher up a few pines and the evergreen oak.

But we had to pay dear for our repose by

Jacob's well. The heat was intense, even in the shade, and the swarms of insects proved an intolerable plague. We broke up early in order to meet the refreshing breeze from the mountains. During a short rest on our road thither, Lili told me the following history.

But a preface is necessary. Two things will, doubtless, strike you, in this little story, which treats of faith, an infirm, deranged faith, that struggles in vain to become clear-sighted, and to obtain repose.

First, that it is Lili who tells the story, Lili, who, in the pure faith of her childhood, faithful and bright as a mirror, had never known anything of these doubts, these struggles, these deep falls and pains. Even if she had read or heard the story, how was she able to repeat it with such truthfulness, and impart to it all the force of reality. I cannot say. I can give no other explanation than that which lies in inspiration. I have, I think, already hinted, that during the latter portion of her lifetime, Lili's physical and mental nature developed themselves with astonishing speed. To this I will only add that, as her strength increased, it seemed as if her whole being were under the influence of inspiration. All the mysteries of Heaven and earth were clear to her eyes.

And, secondly, that it is I who tell the story, I, who in Hell can form no idea as to what faith is. If I could, I should either not be here, or should, at the same instant, be set at liberty. To explain this phenomenon, I must direct your attention to something which ranks far below inspiration, namely, to memory. Yes, it is simply a matter of memory, my inner being, my spirit, gains no benefit from it.

My heart, perhaps, may, but not my spirit. Puzzle myself as long as I may—and do you not think I have done so?—I am quite unable to be conscious of anything that has the remotest resemblance to faith.

One or two features are clear enough to my conscience, but directly I try to gather them together they dissolve and vanish away.

It is exactly as it has sometimes happened to me with some face or other I have recalled. I have been able to picture it feature by feature, the eyes were so and so, such was the forehead, the mouth, the chin, and ———.

But I have not been able to unite all these features into one picture. The countenance, the individuality, would not reveal themselves to me. The reason, doubtless, must have been that there was a gulf, to speak figuratively, between us, as there is now between me and the kingdom of salvation.

Ah! I have hit it better than I had imagined! There is a person I am always longing to see before me; it is God's Son, who once was made man for the sake of a lost world. I can picture His features separately to myself, can talk, can even tell of Him. But never, never more shall I see Him himself in the fullness of His mercy and love!

Let this suffice! In a word, the truth of the matter is this, that great as the perplexity was that prevailed in that poor soul of whom we are speaking, it is still a heavenly brightness compared with the darkness that rules within me.

But you must not think that I do not feel in repeating this and other histories.

Lili, then, related as follows:—

“When the Apostle Peter was bidding a last farewell to the disciples at Antioch, before proceeding to Rome to die as a martyr, a great multitude of friends, old and young, accompanied him a long way on the road. At length the time came for them to part. With many tears they received the embraces and blessing of the Apostle, and thereon returned on their road with heavy, but God-loving hearts. Alone with his companions the Apostle continued his journey.

“And yet all had not turned back. An

aged man remained behind, after having received the farewell kiss, to follow the Apostle a little farther. When Peter noticed this he stopped, and bade his companions to walk on.

“‘You have something on your heart still, my son,’ said the old man, kindly, as soon as they were quite alone. ‘Say what is it you require?’

“‘Father,’ answered the stranger, with a quivering voice; ‘is it not by faith that a man is justified, and is saved before God?’

“‘Yes, truly, my son; have you not this faith?’

“‘I have it, venerable father; but know not what I have in it. For there is nothing more infirm, more unstable, than my faith; and yet that is the only thing on which I can rest my hope of salvation. It is the source of all my tribulation and distress. At one time it is great, at another little; and again at another it quite disappears, though only for a while. Sometimes it breaks, as it were, into a thousand pieces, of which I only retain one single one, the precious Saviour’s name. . . . Oh, thou, my Saviour! There have been times when faith was the fullness of life in me; it has raised me up on its powerful wings far above the world and all its perishable things. I believed only, and was happy. I

believed that I only needed to pray, in order to obtain ; to seek, in order to find ; to knock, that the kingdom of Heaven might be opened to me. I believed that I was sealed with the Holy Spirit, and that I could never more stray away from God's fatherly hand and heart ; that I was purchased and bought with a price, and through time and eternity was safe in my Saviour's love. I had no arrogant thoughts in all this, be assured, Father Peter ! But still it must have been a vain belief. For just at such times, such moments, when I felt myself to be in the closest and happiest union with the Saviour, my fall was nearest at hand ; and oh ! how deep that fall has often been ! I plunged suddenly downwards from the heights, and found myself lying in the dust, crushed, bleeding, faint ; exactly like that man who once journeyed from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves. But—the good Samaritan was far off !

“ ‘ Ah, my father ! what trials have I not had ! It was little to me that the world testified against my faith ; but my own life's experience testified against it. It was more than I could endure.

“ ‘ And yet I ever rose up again to renew the battle of life. Again and again I made my understanding captive in order to live in

the faith of God's Son. Vain, miserable attempts! I fell ever anew!

““Oh, how grieved I have been; how I have wept over myself! But I never found in this repentance of mine the true power of the Holy Spirit to bring about a lasting and secure union with my Redeemer. Even you, Father Peter, once wept bitterly after a great fall. But after you had wept, you rose up never to fall again, never to deny your Saviour more. But I have again and again been forced to weep these bitter, to me doubly bitter, fruitless tears. I rose up only to fall afresh, and again to deny my Lord and Master.

““Is it not true, that salvation cometh of faith only? But you see, righteous father, what is the state of my faith. I have but one name for certain, the precious Saviour's name; that alone has never deserted me. All else is tossed up and down, and is ever ready to suffer shipwreck. Even if I had not known before what to think of my faith, it would have been terribly clear to me, when I lately heard that apostolic word declare, “Show me thy faith by thy works!” For my works, father, if they are not altogether evil, are still on the whole full of foolishness, and testify in a mass against my faith. I must allow that my faith never has stood its trial. Were

I to judge myself, I should have to say "it is useless." I dare never hope to be saved by it.

"When I now look back upon my past life, how long has the struggle been, how severe, how painful! Yes, I often stood upon the brink of despair. I will not say that my powers, after so many downfalls, so many fruitless exertions, are now nearly becoming exhausted. For strong or weak, I will, I must, continue to struggle on; and, after all, it is not mine, but God's strength whereon the victory depends. But, my father, I am beginning to be an old man and infirm, and am verging towards the grave. Humanly speaking, dare I hope to conquer now, where I could not conquer before? This reflection causes me more than the horror and pain of death! I have only one hope left, namely this, that the good Samaritan, whose name has never left my heart and my lips, if not sooner, will at all events in my last hour come to me, take compassion on me, and take me to the inn, never more to lose sight of me again.

"But will he come? Often and often has he bound up my wounds; I cannot doubt that; but I never came into the inn. Will he come? Am I not altogether unworthy of him? I have loved, not father nor mother,

son nor daughter, but that which was far more pitiful, more than him. And my faith—dare I in a word give that poor, unstable, and timorous essence which I bear within me the name of faith, of a saving faith? Oh, holy father, what shall I do to find peace? What shall I do to avoid destruction and be saved?

“The Apostle delayed answering. His countenance became, as it were, transfigured, as he looked before him into space. What was it that had moved the old man’s heart so happily? It was a recollection! He saw himself in the spirit by the Lake of Genesareth; he heard once more the risen Saviour asking :

“‘Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?’ And his heart replied, ‘Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee!’ And the Saviour added, ‘Keep my sheep!’

“‘Keep my sheep!’

“The Apostle’s look fell upon the suppliant. Here was one of the Good Shepherd’s lost sheep. And he said to him with inward emotion :

“‘Poor man, as you cannot rectify your faith, henceforth try to rectify your love. Pay attention to what I have to say. Henceforth you shall have but one aim, one thought,

namely, how you can show the Lord your love. Your whole life shall be given up to this thought. In all your actions, in all your relations, you shall have this only before your eyes. The greatest thing must not be too great, the smallest too little, for you to show your Saviour that you really love Him. Sacrifice after sacrifice shall you bring Him, as you show Him that in all things you deny yourself for His sake ! Yes, for His sake ! Henceforth the spirit of these words be your strength ! Let them live in your soul, and act according to them ! Then shall you find peace, and be happy ; for in the same proportion that you let Him feel that you love Him, will you feel that He loves you, and so you will be saved. Love will be in and for you the fulfilment of the law.'

" ' See,' continued Peter, with an impressive voice ; ' see how wonderful this love of His is ! It appears exactly as if it were you who were bringing Him sacrifice after sacrifice. But it is only so in appearance ; for the value of all the offerings you bring Him does not benefit Him, but you yourself. He takes nothing, but only gives, according to His word : " It is more blessed to give than to receive ! " He is satisfied with your love alone. It is not you, but He Himself who makes the sacrifice, as the fullness of that

sacrifice He once offered is of infinite benefit to you, in life, in death, and in eternity.

“ ‘My son, now go in peace, and for the rest of your life think only of this one thing; how, in small things as well as in great, in everything you may be able to show the Lord that you love Him!’

“ ‘But faith, oh father,’ asked the stranger, ‘how shall it fare with faith, by virtue of which alone a man can be saved?’

“A hallowed smile lightened up the old man’s features as he answered :

“ ‘Son, trouble not yourself about it. There shall be no lack of faith. Simple child, do you really think that faith can be lacking there, where the fullness of love is present? Go your way, hold firm to that you have! Mercy and peace be with you.’ ”

Did I not speak to you some time ago of one great pain in the place of many? Well, my friend only be patient! I have more to say about it.

We wander about here always on the brink of despair; that is intelligible enough. But a little push, and we should fall headlong into the depths below. I am, of course, referring to the depths of our own hearts, into which we plunge, a prey to the powers of evil let

loose there. Sometimes in silent despair we submit to our fate, and allow ourselves in all meekness to be torn asunder; at others we make a fierce resistance, and only allow ourselves to be taken after a bloody struggle. It all depends on our humour! But how unequal is this terrible battle! It is a battle with naked hands against teeth and talons. Can you not see it plainly before you?

But the most fearful thing is, that I am personally present in this encounter, both with my hands on the one side, and with my teeth and talons on the other side. With my hands I am desperately determined to defend myself, with my teeth and talons I am furiously bent on tearing myself to pieces. On the one side there is the natural instinct of self-preservation; on the other, an unnatural, ferocious detestation of myself.

I do not know how long these paroxysms last, it is quite uncertain, there is no natural limit to them. Nay, nay, my friend, do not think there are! Here, in Hell, nature is not exhausted as in the world; in fact, there is no nature at all. As I am sitting here, there is not so much as a particle, a drop of nature in me.

But the paroxysm comes to an end at last. When I have raved my time; when there is

not, as it were, a bit of me left, so to speak, I gradually become calmer, and am as I was before. It abates, you would say in the world. Well, the expression does not quite suit; but let me just for once say the same here, "it abates!"

So far all paroxysms resemble each other. But sometimes—(and I am entrusting to you the innermost secret of my soul; I might say the most precious, but there is more in that word than Hell admits of)—sometimes, when all remorse and pain sinks down, the image of the crucified One appears in all its majesty, as if in triumph, to my spirit.

Yes, truly, it abates! It is as if the tempest and the billows had laid themselves to rest, and a dead calm had ensued. The actual torture is then certainly not less; but now there is only one immeasurable pain, as silent as it is deep; one monstrous remorse instead of thousands. What a terrible change! It is just as if I had been one of those who crucified Him!

But there is nothing ennobling in this pain. Peace remains far away still. And let me confess it—ah, I said much too much just now when I spoke of the picture of the crucified One. I would so fain believe that I saw it before me.

At the first moment it appears to me as if it stood expressly before me ; but when I look at it, it has vanished. Nay, it is there, I am convinced. But I cannot retain it ; it disappears from me in mist and darkness.

But the cross ; the cross on which He hung remains behind ; I can see that as plainly as ever I saw anything in the world ! My friend, is not even that a great deal ? I am unable to attach any definite idea to it ; the more I exert myself, the more confused and perplexed I become. In the world the cross is the emblem of faith. But it is here I fail. Nevertheless the cross is something in itself ; for it is His cross. And I have seen it before me !

Is there not a hope contained therein, old friend ; a great hope, according to our condition here ?

Oh, how happy are you who can wander beneath the cross ! And yet you so often wander beneath it with murmuring, and tears, and bitter lamentations.

CHAPTER XXX.

WE were sitting together on a lofty, precipitous slope above the sea. Over our heads some solitary trees, which served as a landmark to sailors, murmured in the wind ; and far below our feet the waves broke with a melodious ripple on the beach. No music in the world could have been more enchanting.

It was towards evening ; one of those precious, long days, which compose the greatest fascination of the north. Even when the sun has sunk down, it is not properly night ; twilight still lingers over the face of nature, as if matter itself had drunk in the light and would not again give it up. It is only in the north that summer, in the fullest sense, is known. One day holds out its hand to the other ; there is no night, only some soft twilight hours to doze and dream in, and from which one may snatch the necessary repose.

But the last hours of day are undoubtedly the loveliest, especially when the sea lies

extended before one, with a distant coast line on its farther side, raising itself up clearly and boldly, and seeming to invite the soul to repose on numberless points, the one surpassing the other in beauty.

But my soul was bound to the coast on this side; for she was sitting by my side. She was doing some fancy work; and I should have been reading, but the book had fallen from my hand, and I had forgotten myself and everything else around me. I had only eyes for her. How lovely she was in the first bloom of youth; but little over fifteen years!

Certainly she was more lovely afterwards; but what can be compared with this first charm of maidenhood? I cannot express myself better than by saying that there is a something peculiar, unspeakably touching about it. She was so delicate, so pure and bright; like some field or woodland flower that has just unfolded its blossom, on which no spot or stain is visible, but which is perfect in its simple, dew-besprinkled loveliness—ah, how long!

Her delicate features were somewhat pale; but it was the paleness of the lily, when the evening blush casts its farewell tint upon it. Her blood was coursing fleetingly under her transparent skin in all the freshness and per-

fume of youth. It needed so little to call forth a blush upon her cheek. Her thick, shining dark hair artlessly encircled her open brow, and fell down in heavy ringlets, almost too heavy, upon her neck and shoulders. Her eyes were cast downwards, and their long lashes threw a peculiar shadow upon her cheeks. Thousands of graces lay modestly concealed within it. There was something so child-like in the gentle, anxious look of her face, that in contemplating her one could for a moment forget that there was a woman before one. But only for a moment. For there was a majesty enthroned on her forehead, a hidden life in the shadows of her downcast eyes, that plainly proclaimed the maiden.

I sat contemplating her. A remarkable, I might say a hallowed, peacefulness was diffused over her whole person; but it was no inanimate peacefulness. Her young bosom heaved and sank with a gently undulating movement that could scarce be observed. She was quietly occupied with her work. Now and then a gleam shot across her face, or a gentle smile played on her lips, as if some fresh thought or pleasant idea had just dawned upon her soul.

But as I sat thus lost in my contemplation of her, my spirit sank deeper and deeper

within me, and gave way to purely carnal thoughts. I devoured her, as it were, with my burning glances; I revelled in the inexpressible joy of having her in anticipation in my possession. And yet it was no impure contemplation I indulged in. Lili could never be an object for aught that savoured of impurity; but my flesh had led my spirit captive within me.

I had forgotten myself. And yet nothing escaped my notice. I noticed how little by little a delicate blush mantled up her cheeks, and thence extended to her forehead and neck; I noticed how her hands trembled. It was a warning sign. But I would not be warned; I could not tear myself away.

At length, with a mingled air of gentle reluctance and generous pride, she raised her eyes; and as their glances fell on me, as from twin stars in the night, the enchantment was at an end. A feeling of shame came over me, and once more I returned to consciousness.

"Why do you look so long and so intently upon me?" she inquired.

"Why? Can I say? . . . Do you dislike it, Lili?"

"I cannot help it, dear Otto, but it really is against my wish," she answered, hesitatingly. "Yes, 'against' is the proper expression.

When you look at me so, I become so strangely restless. It is just as if I were forced to submit to some severe restraint; as if some one held their arms around me, and I could not stir. I think I have experienced something similar in dreams. It is childish, perhaps; but you can do without looking at me in that way, can you not, Otto?"

"Of course! But are you afraid of me?"

"Afraid!" she exclaimed, beaming with animation; "afraid of you! Now I must laugh. No, that I am not. I might just as well ask if you were afraid of me," she added, laughing; "and that you certainly are not, are you, Otto?"

And she laid her soft little hand on mine.

"You are not angry, then?" she asked, after a little.

Yes, that I was. I was inwardly wroth with myself; at that moment I almost detested myself. But I answered as quietly as I could:

"Lili, when was I angry with you last?"

"Certainly, it is a long time ago!" she replied, laughing. "But, come, let us go on farther."

And she leaned on my arm so confidently, so affectionately, as if she were actually trying to make me feel how little she was afraid of

me. And she was not thinking about it; but I was, and once more felt happy.

That contemplation—I might call it, that appropriation to myself of her beauty and charms, was in reality inexpressibly painful to me. I felt that there was a gulf between me and her who was the dearest to me on earth; and that the more I gave myself up to it the wider did the gulf become that separated us. But her look, her gentle voice, her unconstrained confidence, had transformed me in a moment. She was much stronger than the demon within me. The natural equipoise between spirit and flesh was again restored, and now the most perfect harmony reigned between her and me. At such moments I would be deeply impressed with the reflection that it was only by pursuing a spiritual road I should ever possess her; along other paths, even though aided by all the demoniac powers, I should never reach my goal.

We wandered along a path that ran along the beach after it emerged from the wood, and wound itself up and down, and in and out between the sloping heights. It was a lovely evening in June. The fishermen had returned home, and were busily occupied on the beach with their wives and children. Some large ships were gliding lazily along, with flapping

sails, as the evening breeze died slowly away. Some little children were playing on the sand outside the fishermen's huts; while in the horizon we could distinctly see the opposite coast radiant with the brilliant hues of sunset. It was one of those rare evenings, when one feels the happiness of an earthly life to be, as it were, the reflection of an eternal and blessed existence.

Alas! my friend; how deeply I sigh! But my sighs cannot be traced on these pages.

"Afraid of you!" continued Lili, as we wandered along. "What a strange idea! On the contrary, I feel so safe and secure with you. Often when we are walking together I think how strong you are, and I feel quite proud of it. It is just as if you were strong for me too as well as for yourself. You would never let any one insult me; and I say to myself, 'Who could stand against him?' . . . It must be glorious to be a man; but still more glorious is it, I think, to be a woman, and have a strong and noble man by one's side. And then, I think, not only how strong, but how wise you are.

"They say there is so much evil in the world; it is sad; but it cannot well be otherwise. But the wise man foresees, sees through, and meets the evil, and it has no

power over him. And, therefore, I go so safely and so comfortably wherever you take me, and do everything you tell me without reflection. I do not trouble myself about being strong or wise myself; but feel proud to think that you are so. And then I think how noble you are; what courage you have, not only to toil and to suffer, but to give yourself up to and to sacrifice yourself for those you love. I sometimes fancy to myself that I am in great danger and peril; but I am not at all frightened, because you are with me. You would not hesitate, I know, to risk even your own life for my sake. Yes, you smile! Perhaps it is only what you wise people call dreams. But you will not make me believe that all dreams are childish. For it is quite true that you are as wise as you are noble and strong. That is why I dream so, and not otherwise."

I smiled! For how could I help it? My bosom became so light, as if a thousand stars were shining there. It was perfect Elysium! What a power this child possessed to exalt my spirit within me, to raise me up above myself, without being conscious of it! But it was in this very unconsciousness that her almost divine power consisted. At this moment, and for a good while afterwards, I was not only the

strong and wise, but the noble man which her innocent nature pictured to itself, appointed to support and protect her, and ready to risk even life itself for her sake. Oh! happy moments! I have had my taste of heavenly joys, and shall never enjoy them again.

Evening was coming on apace; but we were close to our home. Not far off was the last place where we used to rest a while on our return from our walks. It was on a high cliff, several feet above the sea, and the highest point along the whole coast. Straight as a wall it reared itself up from the beach; and there was but a little breadth of sand between its foot and the sea. When the sea was high the waves broke against its base and sent their spray far up its side. But this evening it was perfectly calm; only the uniform splashing and moaning of the waves upon the beach was to be heard. On the topmost point of the cliff a large cross was erected, and beneath it was a little bench. Here we rested ourselves, and sat hand in hand. The sun was on the point of sinking down. All around us, on land and sea, breathed forth an inexpressible peacefulness.

We sat a few moments in perfect silence; the heart had enough occupation in the quiet enjoyment of the scene around.

"See!" suddenly she exclaimed, as she raised her arm and pointed to the sky.

It was a flock of swans that were hurrying in their oblique flight to the lovely shores on the other side the Sound. They were very high up; but it was so calm that we could plainly hear their melodious trumpeting.

"Now they are gone!" continued Lili after a deep breath, when we had followed them with our eyes as far as we could. "Are they not like the souls of the blessed that, released from the fetters of earth, fly across to the land of eternity, where there is no more pain; where God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes? . . . Oh! how they must rejoice! What a flight! what longing! what happiness!"

I, too, had had similar thoughts. This quiet evening hour had awakened in me, too, exalted and holy feelings.

But the silence was broken. We talked about the rippling of the waves; about the sweet music which one could never weary of listening to, and which, even without one's knowing it, carried the soul away with it into infinity. I compared it to the uniform, monotonous beating of a pendulum backwards and forwards, and remarked that as the pendulum measured time, so did the dash of the waves seem to measure eternity.

We spoke of the strange, longing hankering after the future which is innate in every person, and which finds vent, how ever happy, how ever prosperous he may be, when it is permitted.

At last Lili said :

“How beautiful is this cross which they have erected on the highest ledge of the cliff! What a comfort it must be to seamen to behold it when the storm and the wind are raging! The white cliff of itself attracts attention, and from it the cross cries aloud with outstretched arms far over the sea:—‘Fear not! I have ransomed thee! Thou art mine!’”

“But do you think that all persons feel alike, Lili?”

“Not all persons, but all Christians must feel alike on the main point!”

After a pause she continued, as, without knowing it, her hand took a firmer hold of mine :

“Young as I am, Otto, I have often and often experienced what a power there is in the cross. It was a natural, and as reasonable as it was beautiful, custom to make the sign of the cross. By giving it up, the world has lost more than it knows of; only in Heaven does one know it. Doubtless there was mourning in Heaven when the sign of the cross fell into

disuse in daily life on earth. Whenever I feel disturbed, I need only to bring the cross to my mind; at the same moment I see it in spirit before me, and again become calm. It is, as it were, a miracle! But the world's greatest miracle has been enacted on the cross."

"Is, then, your heart too at times uneasy, Lili?"

"Yes, many a time. It is true I have no troubles, nothing to fear; but for all that I feel at times uneasy. It must lie in our nature to be so."

"But I have another and a still more powerful means of calming myself," continued Lili, as she rose to her feet, and embraced the cross with her arms. "It is really a secret between God and myself, but one which all persons must know. Whenever I am grieved or dispirited I have only to name the Saviour's precious name. In how ever low a tone I may express it, there is at once peace in my heart, a peace that passeth all understanding. Have you not felt the same, Otto? Oh, try it! Let not so rich a blessing go untried. It is so easy: one word, one name, and the trouble is gone."

"No, I had not tried it! At least it was very long ago."

But—how moved I was! I would, I must, make an alteration; and it was not the Saviour's fault that an alteration did not take place. At this moment He was knocking at the door of my heart, and I asked in holy fear:

“Is it Thou who knocks? Oh, wait, only wait, till I have a place prepared for Thee!”

And He had to wait!

Have you not often experienced what a human being may suffer in dreams?

You had a terrible dream. Your heart was bound together by anxiety and pain. It was truly the pains of Hell. But when you awoke, how relieved, how happy you felt at being able to sigh forth, “Thank God, 't was only a dream!” It was exactly as if you had been born again. You felt, indeed, to the very bottom of your soul, how beautiful it was to live, even under the heavy weight of the common burdens and trials of life. You were so inwardly grateful, and everything seemed so bright. What hitherto had appeared to you heavy to bear, now vanished into nothingness to your conscience.

Ah, my friend! these bad, terrible dreams are not devoid of truth. Oh, take care! take care! If you do not, you will awaken some

time in terrible anguish, and find that it was no dream.

I do not know what to think or to believe. Doubt has taken entire possession of me, and doubt is a terrible thing. It is difficult to say which is the worst, remorse or doubt. Both are like ravenous wild beasts. Remorse is like a tiger that springs on its prey, and rends it asunder tooth and nail. Doubt is like a serpent, that crawls stealthily and discharges its venom, and coils itself round its prey with its icy-cold embrace, till the very bones crack. I am speaking from experience; the serpent only relaxes its hold of me to let me fall into the claws of the tiger.

Is Martin my son, or is Martin's sweetheart my daughter? Once I certainly arrived at the firm opinion that the latter was the case; but before that I was just as firmly convinced that the former was the truth. It is the imagination which is the ruling power, far more so than in the world. It is a fact that imagination is worse than pestilence.

I am, however, quite certain that one or other of the two is the case; but which? At one moment, I am inclined to one side; at the next to the other. Not only does it cause me incessant anxiety, but it is a constant source

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of pain. I cannot dismiss the subject from my mind. Again and again I balance the one against the other, but the weights are false, consequently no result is obtained. I must have it cleared up, but each endeavour to do so only plunges me deeper into darkness.

Anna could solve my doubts and my torment; but there is no hope from this source—fool that I am—neither from any other. It is, in fact, sheer madness to name hope and Hell in the same breath.

Anna and I shall, probably, never interchange another word through all eternity. I see her every now and then, but can never get near her. She has become quite wild, after I had surprised her a few times, and is now ever on the flight. It is natural. Only fly, fly, poor Anna! Your executioner is after you! Once you found more than death in my embrace. Then there was nothing you denied me; now you refuse to give me a single word! But I am not surprised. And if I were, it would be that you have come into the torments of Hell. Ought not I rather to be in Hell twice over, and you away from it? . . . Pardon me, my friend! My thoughts are once more on their wild chase.

This is the knotty point, and hard, indeed,

is the knot ; so hard, indeed, that all my nerves crack.

“ What had Martin to confide to me ? What secret could it be that was to clear up everything ? ”

This question, which was on my lips as I passed out of the world, has been my passport to Hell.

My friend, there is nothing more dangerous than such questions when one is lying at the point of death. The source of unquenchable torment is often to be found in them. Ask none other question but this alone :

“ How shall I save my poor, sinful soul, and enter into peace ? ”

CHAPTER XXXI.

MY letters have become less frequent. Are you not afraid that they will cease altogether? I often feel myself adjured to write, but I shun the exertion it entails. And even after I have begun to write, I have a great deal to contend against. Often and often I feel myself tempted to break off in the middle of a sentence, such a sudden loathing comes over me.

This brings Aunt Betty's letters to my mind. And it is well that I have happened to think of them, otherwise, notwithstanding my good intentions, this letter would have fallen to the ground. For I cannot deny, that it is only after a great struggle I am now taking up my pen, and the very sight of the ink, as it flows from it, causes me a feeling of disgust that is quite oppressive. But thinking of Aunt Betty always cheers me up.

I would speak, then, about Aunt Betty's letters. They were just like herself, earnest,

eccentric, full of humour, irregular and abrupt in their train of ideas. In short, her letters were fiery and flighty. I cannot express myself better.

She never wrote other than confidential letters; therefore she could, with reason, claim some liberties, and she certainly took very great ones. The greatest of these was, that she would frequently break off in the middle of a subject, and, without more ado, begin upon another. And this she did quite unconsciously to herself: it seemed to be a necessity. The fact was, ideas came streaming so quickly and so forcibly into her lively, earnest mind, that she was quite unable to get them committed to paper. Her thoughts were always a long way in advance of her pen. She wrote, if I may use the expression, by anticipation. The natural consequence was that no one who did not know her intimately, and who was unable to follow up her train of thought, how ever slight the hint might be, could possibly derive any benefit from a perusal of her letters.

But frequently neither an intimate acquaintance with her peculiarities, nor the shrewdest guesses, sufficed to do this; so that the most ridiculous mistakes occurred.

Here is one of them.

One day she came to me in a great state of alarm, with a letter in her hand.

"She must have got a screw loose, this excellent Mariane P——!" she exclaimed, quite dumbfounded. "You shall hear; she has certainly done a pretty thing! What ever shall I do, poor sinner that I am?"

I tried to tranquillize her a little, and then got her to tell me more about the matter.

"In the town of R—— was a poor woman with three little children, whom we supported. The husband was in prison. Some time ago, my old friend informed me that he had returned home, but only in time to receive his wife's last breath. There he stood, then, with three helpless children, and helpless too himself. Something must be done, and that quickly.

"I answered her letter immediately, and enclosed some money, entreating her at the same time to send me an accurate description of the man and the children. You understand? She was to give me sex, age, size, &c."

"Did you want to know the man's sex, dear aunt?" I asked, roguishly.

"No nonsense, Otto! it is too serious a matter. God help me, poor woman that I am! What does she do, but send me the man and all the children in a heap. They are below in the kitchen, and are waiting for me

to provide for them. The man, a great idle fellow, stinks of tobacco. . . . Yes, I am nicely in for it!"

"You should not have written, dear aunt, to say that she was to send the man and his children without delay, and have forgotten to add the rest?" I said, inquiringly.

"How can you ask such a silly question. You know yourself how plainly and how decidedly I always express myself. Everything I have to say is always so clear to me, and the next instant it is copied down on the paper. Why, even a child could understand my letters. Simple Mariane! you are not old enough to have grown childish: and even if you had, you still might have understood my meaning. Only think, Otto; here she sends me the whole boiling of them six and thirty miles from the country!"

The man and his children had actually made themselves at home downstairs, and were devouring large quantities of victuals, evidently considering their journey to be accomplished. The man, who had just come out of the House of Correction, appeared to be a lazy, idle, good-for-nothing fellow. Aunt Betty was in a terrible state of perplexity. She wrung her hands, and ran up and downstairs, without knowing what she wanted, or what she ought

to do ; but her thoughts were down below all the while.

The difficulty, however, was solved in the most successful way, partly through my father's powerful assistance. But the misunderstanding proved a real boon to the man and his children ; all of whom, after some little trouble, were provided for.

It is a self-consequence, that lusts and passions in Hell, which are destitute of flesh, and of food to feed on, can find no satisfaction, and must become burning torments. But you can form no idea, without experiencing it, how they are set on fire. Naturally, therefore, the powers of the imagination are the masters. Even in the world this power of the imagination may be a terrible, dangerous thing. By excitement and exercise it can at last reach such a development as to take possession of the understanding. But it is only here that it first displays its wild, unruly nature. It becomes a perfect monster, that racks and wears away the constitution in the cruellest manner. Its whims, as you may suppose, take many different directions—the pleasures of the table, the bottle, beautiful women, &c. ; in a word, every kind of natural and unnatural lust. The power of imagination knows no bounds. It works in the head like a kind of mental

steam-engine, and its effects are felt in the heart. Lusts and pleasures are kindled, glow, and, as it were, crackle; one becomes raging as it were with lust, and knows not whither to steer. . . . Alas! there is nothing, nothing to satisfy it on!

Certainly nothing is easier than to give the objects of one's desires a certain kind of existence. It is only necessary to wish, and one is in possession of whatever one desires: that is to say, one can have before one to the life a well-covered table, full bottles, an abode of luxury, in short, anything whatsoever. As regards pretty women, Hell is chock full of them. But all this is worse than nothing; it only serves to fill up the measure of torment. But let me be silent on such matters. It must be plain enough to you; and should it not be, I cannot give you better advice than bid you go and read King Ixion's history! Like him, we too embrace the cloud instead of Juno. The wheel too, on which he is whirled round and round, is a striking representation of the manner in which the powers of imagination toss us about and become a torment of Hell to us.

Perhaps you are inclined to ask, "Have you here been giving a sketch of your own sufferings?"

“Yes, of course,” is my reply. But do not expect any more detailed explanation. Have I not, once for all, told you that I was a man of strong sensual inclinations, and violent passions? And do you think that either the one or the other has become any weaker here?

So I wallow in the lusts of a time that has gone by, like King Tantalus in the fable; and so at times I am consumed by a maddening, despairing passion. If there is any difference between me and others, it is this, that I am inwardly ashamed of myself. How can one who has loved Lili, aye, and has been loved by her, succumb to such grovelling enticements?

But there is another difference between me and other people. I know a means of escape from this Hell within a Hell; and my tyrant, that is my powers of imagination, must even promote it. As soon as Lili's pure and bright image appears before my soul, lusts and passions fall back powerless into the depths from which they emerged; the unhallowed fire within my breast is quenched, and I can still feel like a human being.

“I am so weary,” said Lili softly!

Immediately I stopped the ass on which she was riding; and, with more than a mother's

tenderness towards her sick infant, I lifted her down, and prepared a seat for her to rest herself upon. It was the bridge that leads over Cedron.

“I am so weary!”

Oh, what a sorrowful, painful tale these few words contained! Determined to attach no importance to the idea of an ever-increasing feeling of weariness at the age of seventeen, I had hardened my heart against the truth. But in my heart of hearts I had sorrowful presentiments.

“It will probably terminate in the rupture of a blood-vessel,” an English physician had told me in Jaffa, “guard her against all kind of exertion, and especially against every mental excitement.”

And I had done so. How gentle and quiet had our pilgrimage been through the Holy Land! She had proceeded, as it were, within a magic circle, where nothing savouring of danger or fear, and, above all, nothing of a disquieting tendency durst show itself. Turks and Bedouins had to offer her their chivalrous services alike. Yes, those were glorious, never-to-be-forgotten days!

Everywhere she found soothing, elevating tokens of Him, the Saviour, to whom she had wholly given her heart. And everywhere

He spoke to her through the Holy Scriptures. He walked with her from place to place; and she felt so happy. Once she said, "I feel as if I were in Heaven already." The sun rose and set for her, as in a blissful dream. It was difficult for her to believe that what she experienced was reality. Time for her was no more; no more days, nor hours, only moments snatched from eternity.

And yet, at last, it came like a thunderbolt from a cloudless sky. It was not a mortal blow; but doubtless it would be if it returned, and, in all probability, it would come again.

She had regained a little strength now. But how long would it hold out? She did not worry herself; but, as for me, it was as if her life were in my hands. She was like a broken lily, that still breathes forth its sweet perfume, and extends its silvery leaves beseechingly towards Heaven; but which never again will raise its drooping head.

"Lili is weary!" That is the whole history. The flower will wither away, and its dust be mingled with the earth.

We had encamped by the Cedron. That moment, that scene, is still vividly portrayed to my soul. I think I could point out every stone, indicate every fissure in the mountains that hemmed us in around.

We were close to the arched bridge that spans the brook. Behind us was Mount Moriah, where once was the temple of Solomon and Herod. Now it bears the towering mosques of Omar. On the right, an unimpeded view down the Valley of Jehoshaphat unfolded itself. I call it a valley; but, properly speaking, it is but a mountain defile. For it is deep and narrow, and at places but some hundred feet broad. Its right slope is perforated by numberless ancient crypts, hewn out of the solid rock. Here are the tombs of the kings and prophets. On the sloping side of the mountain of offence on the left, and in the background is a miserable little Jewish village.

In the foreground, the Cedron wound along in its deep stony bed, which, for the present, was quite dried up. On the farther side, the gently sloping sides of Mount Olives, with the garden of Gethsemane, reared themselves aloft. A little group of time-honoured olive trees marked the spot. Between the deep dark shadows the setting sun here and there threw a dazzling stream of light on one side of the valley. Only on the mountain top was it subdued and soft.

It was perfectly shady around our camp. A cool, but scarce perceptible breeze had begun to waft down the mountain side. Lili was

sitting absorbed in thought, with her arms hanging carelessly down, and with folded hands. She was so weary, perhaps even unto death. Her eyes were cast down, almost closed, and she was very pale. I could not help comparing her to some beautiful picture of mourning on a monument. But it was not her paleness so much that caused me anxiety, as a constantly and suddenly recurring glow. It was like a flame that momentarily flashed across her face, only to leave it as pale as it was before.

On the right, a little in the background, lay the ass and its driver, both of them asleep. "Happy beings," I thought, or rather, "happy asses."

On the left, somewhat farther off, sat the Turkish soldier we had with us for protection, armed to his teeth, smoking his long pipe in luxurious, heedless indolence.

A deadly silence prevailed all around. It was unendurable. I broke it by softly asking Lili what she was thinking of?

"I am thinking of my sins!" was the gentle answer.

"Of your sins!" I replied, as I had hard work in refraining from saying something which I knew would pain her. "My good child, they cannot be so many or so great."

“Do not say that, Otto. We are all of us constantly sinning, even without knowing it; and therefore it is that we know so few of our sins; but God knows them all, and in his sight they are great.”

“But how did you come to think of them just now?”

Lili started. It took so very little on her part to make me all attention. I let my eyes glance around. Yes, I had cause to feel ashamed of myself. What place in the wide world was more calculated than this to bring one's sins to remembrance?

“Dear Otto!” answered Lili with emotion, “I have just become aware of a fresh sin. Even on this spot it is impossible to keep sinful thoughts at a distance. Suddenly there arose within me an ardent desire to live a little longer; but I forgot to accompany the wish with those words of the Saviour, ‘Not my will, but Thine be done.’ In all things whatsoever we should resign ourselves into God's fatherly hands, else we cannot be his children.”

An unspeakably bitter sensation of vexation and pain shot through my self-willed heart. Involuntarily my eyes turned to the spot where the Mussulman was sitting, and I thought, “It is just as if the words had been

spoken from yon Turk's heart." But soon pain gained the mastery, and I replied :

"Lili, do not doubt it, you will live. Drive away these sorrowful thoughts. O Lili! my sister, my child, remember how dearly you are beloved!"

"I know it, Otto," she answered with a sweet smile, as if she had never known what pain was. "Dearly loved on earth, but more dearly still in Heaven."

"But you must not think the wish sinful, dearest Lili," I said, as she was relapsing into her former mood. "On the contrary, give free utterance to it, and it will be fulfilled; you will live. And if there is any selfishness in it, it is merely one of these natural instincts that God has implanted in the heart. My own Lili, do not be unjust to yourself. Never has a less self-willed, less selfish being than you lived in the world."

"Yes, so affection pronounces," she answered, letting her eyes fall with an expression of tenderness on mine. "But so far you are right. Even if my wish were full of self-will, it was not a selfish one. For I was not thinking of myself alone, but of others too. Otto, do you not comprehend that it was especially for your sake I wished to live? You would miss me more than any

one, would you not, my only, my beloved friend?"

Had I been alone with her, I should have cast myself down before her feet. I stammered forth, perhaps she did not hear me,

"I should die without you!"

Another silence ensued, but this time it was not painful to me. My heart was full of sweet emotions, though mingled at the same time with some degree of pain. Even I, at least for a moment, had seen Heaven opened above me.

Lili's face once more assumed its air of seriousness. A struggle was evidently going on within; but even it was full of tenderness and holy thoughts. What she struggled for was doubtless to be able to say with full and free affection, "Not my will, but Thine be done." But for the moment it seemed as if it would be undecided; for all at once she arose, and said with trembling lips:

"Ah! one cannot but think of one's sins, when the pressure of the chains which keep one back from God is felt. It is sinful to lean so much on the world. Come, my friend, I am strong again now; let us go on."

I gently pressed her hand before leaving hold of it, and answered, not without a tone of reproachfulness,—oh! how could I endure

it,—“On the world, Lili? Is it sinful to lean on them you love in the world? Is then your love a sin? Impossible! And yet you speak as if your heart were full of sins that pained and vexed you.”

Lili let her full glance fall on me; there was a lustre in it, which I must now call unearthly. At that time I had no name for it. Her features seemed to be transfigured, as she replied with animation:

“Yes, my heart is filled with sins, God knows! But vex me? No, Otto, they do not vex me.”

She pointed to the river Cedron, and then continued: “See, there is the river Cedron! Can you number the grains of sand in its bed, great and small? So many and more are the sins of the world. But God’s Son once crossed over Cedron, heavy unto death over them all, and from that moment they existed no more. My sins, too, were amongst the number; but their place is no longer to be found—they pain me no more!”

So we went on farther, over the brook Cedron, up the ascent of Mount Olives to the Garden of Gethsemane. We stayed awhile under the very same olive trees where the Saviour underwent that last struggle in prayer, when his soul was heavy unto death,

and the sweat fell from his forehead to the ground like great drops of blood.

Lili prayed as He had done, a fervent earnest prayer, but unaccompanied with anguish or pain. She prayed, too, for me I am quite certain. And the fruit of her prayer was a perfect peace. When she had finished, there was plainly stamped upon her brow,

“Yea, Father, Thy will be done!”

But I knew no prayer to say; on the contrary, I was nearly cursing my own weakness which had been the cause of our coming to the Holy Land. I wished myself a thousand miles away with her who was dearer to me than the whole world, as I made myself believe that life would have smiled upon us at home; while here death stared us everywhere in the face.

We returned by the shorter route through the Stephen's Gate, as we followed the *Via dolorosa* through the town. From station to station—the ruins of Pilate's house—the place where Mary met her son as he was bending beneath the burden of the cross, and where he fell fainting to the ground—the place where the Saviour turned round and said to the weeping women, “Ye daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children,”—the place where the holy Veronica stepped forward with a napkin and

wiped the sweat and the blood from the Saviour's face, and the napkin was ineffaceably stamped with His image. Here we turned aside; the road goes further to Mount Golgotha. This road is called the Road of Sorrow; it was a road of sorrow to me! But it was not of Him I thought, who once proceeded along it as a lamb to the slaughter, under the curse of sin; it was of myself. Therefore, along the whole of that road I did not derive a grain of consolation; and therefore—yes, therefore—I am tormented now instead of being comforted!

Is it not strange that it has never yet occurred to me to pay a visit to the Jewish capital, one of the wonders of Hell, if I may call it?

Certainly it does not bear the name of Jerusalem; but it must doubtless be the same as that which goes by that name in the world. At least I cannot think of any Jewish capital except by comparison with Jerusalem.

A burning desire has suddenly come over me—I dare scarcely call it a longing—to make a pilgrimage to the city of Jerusalem. Truly, I never experienced anything but pain there; but then it was with her. It is in my power to revisit the places I once visited with Lili. Once more I can roam through the

narrow valley of Jehoshaphat, rest by the high bridge that leads over the brook Cedron, with Mount Olives before me in the distance. Again I can follow the road of sorrow from Gabbatha to Golgotha; and, if I will, lie down by the rich man's door upon the road like another Lazarus.

And yet if it is Jerusalem, it is perhaps quite different from the Jerusalem I once knew—a Jerusalem in ruins. There must be an immense difference between Jerusalem before and after the destruction. And yet the alteration must be great indeed if I could not find out the places once more which I visited with Lili.

I have no peace! The light is waning quickly, and I must away. It is only imagination that impels me, I know full well. But there is a kind of satisfaction in giving way to impulse.

Yet before I set out, I will not forget to inquire and make myself acquainted with the Jewish capital beforehand. Though it lies so remote, and so isolated, still there must be people who know something about it.

CHAPTER XXXII.

FAR, far away, separated by a boundless desert from the main continent of Hell (if I may use the term) the immense Jewish capital is situate. It contains a world within itself. In one incessant cycle the history of the Jewish nation is repeated, from the catastrophe at Golgotha to the destruction of the city. At this point the history ceases; everything is enveloped in the death darkness; and when this has run its course it begins over again.

He who enters the city as the light begins to dawn, once more finds the population overcome with horror at the cruel deed that has just been committed. From every part those words are sounding, "His blood be on us, and our children!" Every one feels that something terrible has occurred, and that something terrible is still impending. All Jerusalem trembles. But the better classes among them, who helped by their presence at that great scene on Golgotha, ask themselves with

gnashing teeth, "Was He not the Son of God?" and beat upon their breasts, and rend their clothes.

Even the high priests and scribes, those stony-hearted beings, are visibly exhausted from what they have experienced. But they comfort themselves with the thought that the sepulchre is well guarded. Early on the great Sabbath morning they go out to it with Caiaphas at their head. Their cheeks are pale, their eyes bloodshot, and their teeth firmly set, as they walk along. But Satan gives them strength. From Golgotha they perceive three crosses, but not one of them raises his eyes. Laying aside their wonted haughtiness they gather up their long garments and hurry by to the sepulchre.

Here they first can breathe freely. Yes, a smile even plays over their scowling faces. Everything is as it should be! The watch is at his post; the seal untouched; a huge stone closes up the entrance!

It is the great Sabbath. But never has this feast been celebrated with such little rejoicing in Jerusalem. The inhabitants cannot recover themselves. All wish the feast only to be over. Their thoughts are far removed from holy things; they try to read each other's anxious, disturbed countenances.

The bread is sour, and they cannot swallow it; the blood of the Paschal Lamb is congealed ere it can be sprinkled upon the door posts. The Angel of Death does not pass by; he is in the midst of them; they plainly feel how he steals upon their hearts.

But with the first glow of dawn a new life is diffused amongst the inanimate throng. Like a flash from the cloud that is big with thunder, the report spreads that the crucified One has arisen.

The tidings fall like a death-knell on their hearts. But can it be true? It is confirmed again and again; there is no longer room for doubt. Only later does the thought of searching the tomb occur to them.

It is empty; the watch is nowhere to be seen!

Pilate is one of the first who receives the dreadful tidings. Tortured by an evil conscience, he has expected the worst, and the worst has come. It is a truth, then, that there is a God who raises up the righteous even from the grave, and who hurls the unrighteous deep down into Hell. He trembles at every strange sound; each moment he expects to see the avenger at the door. He goes to his wife, weak, wretched man! He finds her melted in tears.

“Oh, my dream, my dream!” she cries, as



she wrings her hands ; “ oh ! if only thou hadst had nothing to do with that Righteous Man ! ”

But the high priests and scribes are quick at devising expedients, like all hardened knaves. Hastily they circulate the falsehood that the body of the Nazarene has been stolen away by His disciples, who have spread the report that He is risen. Thereupon they repair to Pilate to complain of the negligence of the guards. Gladly does the perplexed governor give credit to the lie, and finds a wondrous relief in having the unfortunate watch cast into prison.

Yet the first report not only maintains, but gains ground. It is confirmed over and over again that the Son of Man has arisen, and has been seen of many. And the supreme council know of no better expedient than to issue the strictest prohibitions against the name of the crucified One who has arisen from the dead being mentioned.

But little by little, though tardily, these alarming impressions begin to wax fainter, and life goes on in its wonted manner. The multitudes assemble, like frightened sheep that have gone astray, under their old leaders once more, who do not forget to apply the plaister of self-righteousness with fatherly tenderness upon their wounds. Hypocrisy flourishes lux-

uriantly along all the pathways of life, and bears abundant fruit to death. From the whitewashed tombs corruption extends itself far and wide, and soon there is no whole spot on the body of the Jewish people. It is like carrion, and the eagles are not far off.

Pilate has been deposed. Other governors have succeeded him, not so weak as he was, and the people feel it. Cruelty and wrong are heaped upon them. It is no longer endurable. The flames of rebellion are kindled, and with it every evil passion. Jerusalem's worst enemy is within her walls—incurable dissension. Party rages against party in the wildest, most unnatural manner. No abomination, no horror, but it is tried. At length her last hour has come. The enemy breaks in, chafing with a thirst for revenge, in overwhelming might. There is an end to all distress and starvation ; but it is a terrible end. It is the abomination of desolation, which never has been seen before, and never will be seen again till the end of the world.

As the death-darkness comes on, everything is swallowed up : there the history is ended, only to begin again when the next glimmer of dawn appears.

As I entered the city the time was already

far gone. The final catastrophe was approaching with hurried steps. Enmity within was already diffused far and wide; in everything a complete dismemberment prevailed. Only hypocrisy and hatred of the common foe kept the disunited parties together. Cheating, treachery, unchastity of the foulest kind, false witness, murder, witchcraft, were matters of every-day occurrence. But in all appearance it was still the magnificent, holy city of David.

Zion's stronghold reared its head as proudly as ever over the city, and from Mount Moriah the temple still glittered in incomparable splendour. Piety dressed itself in long robes, and stood prominently at the street corners and in the market-places; and a huge crowd of persons streamed daily to and fro from the temple. The disposition to piety evinced itself in many conspicuous ways. Amongst the pious devices used to decorate the street doors, I paid especial attention to one which was repeated over and over again, and which I could not but consider as being very significant—"Godliness is great gain." Two things, in fact, that the people of Israel aimed at—Godliness and Gain. Godliness, indeed, but feigned; merely a dead form without meaning: but gain, forsooth, in real earnest,

by all the means that ingenuity and cheating can devise.

It was with a throbbing heart that I, as a perfect stranger, slunk through the thronged streets. I was in Jerusalem; how different from that which I had known in the world, and yet the same! It was Jerusalem almost unchanged from that time when the Saviour had walked through it. The Saviour? Yes, He stood before my mind whithersoever I went.

Even Lili was for the moment forgotten in Him. Here in Jerusalem surely there must be people who could speak of the Lord.

But first of all I wished to walk on the road of suffering from Gabbatha to Golgotha, and I needed a guide. I applied to the first person I met, to the next, and so on to numbers, but met with a curt refusal from all. Some grew angry, and used threats when I asked them about the "*Via Dolorosa*." Possibly they thought I was a Roman, and spoke Latin. At first I thought it was merely from a dislike to strangers; but soon I noticed that there was not a single one who knew anything of the Virgin Mary's Son from Nazareth. He was forgotten, quite forgotten. Other prophets had come in his stead—false prophets.

So at length I was obliged to help myself, and find my own way as well as I could. First of all I went to Golgotha.

I stood on the hill of Golgotha absorbed in thought. I was searching after something within my breast, which, alas! was not to be found. So it ever was. Before I began to search it appeared to me that it must lie close at hand; but no sooner had the search begun that it was altogether gone.

I thought I was alone; but no! For on casting my eyes on one side, I saw a person standing on the very top of the hill with his arms stretched out. A wondrous form! and a position quite as wondrous! On approaching nearer I heard that his mouth flowed over with blessings.

"Who is it you are blessing so?" I asked.

He started, and regarded me with a wild air. It was evident that he was exerting all his powers to collect his thoughts, but could not. . . . With piteous looks, he answered in a puling tone,

"I do not know!"

But I knew now who he was. I had heard speak of him. It was the wicked thief that once had reviled the Saviour upon the cross. Now he blesses, as once he cursed, but knows not whom he blesses.

Still, at times, it is clear to him, and he answers, "The Son of God!" But then his mind is under a remarkable hallucination; he imagines himself to be the good thief to whom the Saviour said, as he hung upon the cross, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." He looks upon it as an unfortunate mistake that he has come into Hell. Paradise, he maintains, is his proper place. How much wiser was I than he, though not less wretched!

Thereon I set out in search of the brook Cedron, and after a little difficulty succeeded in finding it. Yes, and I succeeded after a very careful observation in finding the exact spot where I and Lili had rested near the lofty bridge. There I allowed myself a little repose; ah, no! it was not repose, merely a truce.

I sat there buried in thought, but experienced none of the satisfaction I had expected. The memory of Lili had not become more lively, more pleasant; on the contrary, I had tasted the bitterness of a deeper loss. Above all, I must confess to myself, that this pilgrimage to the Jewish capital was merely one of the thousand deceptions I met with. Jerusalem was merely a sepulchre, haunted by spirits in cruel earnest in the literal service of condemnation. Spiritually enfeebled, deserted of God, full of hate to man-

kind and herself, Jerusalem became after the day of her visitation but a national carcase, wherein the eagles already were gathered together.

Boundless ruin and destruction stared stiffly at me all around. How could anything be found here that could in any way promote my peace? I had but got my share of Jerusalem's destruction. Fool that I was, what else could I have expected? But wiser we shall never become, as little here as of old in the world.

As I slunk stealthily back the whole city was in uproar and confusion. It was the new governor, the last but one in the cycle, that was making his brilliant entry.

At the very remotest limit lies the City of the Sodomites. It cannot be visited, not even spoken of.

Next to it lies the extensive City of the Mahommedans. Against this, of late, another town has fastened itself like a swallow's nest against the wall. It is the Mormon City. It was but small and insignificant at first, but it develops itself with astounding rapidity. The Mormons crowd to it in ever-increasing streams; they pave, as it were, the road from the Salt Lake to Hell.

Mahomet and Joseph Smith are near kins-

men in spirit. One could call them brothers, if there was not an important difference between them. They are the two greatest liars the world has ever produced; and in the grossest sensuality they not only placed their enjoyment, but sought their Heaven. But in comparison with Joseph Smith, Mahomet was honour itself. For he placed sensual lust before men's eyes without any concealment, while Joseph Smith hypocritically covered it with a veil of spirituality.

Both have now lost the glory of their imposition. When they were in the world hundreds of thousands believed in them, though they themselves were conscious that it was a pack of lies altogether. Now, however, there is not one who believes in them, while they are convinced themselves that what they preach is pure truth and Divine wisdom. This constitutes their great pain and torment. They now have to eat their own filth, and people jeer at them scornfully while they gulp it down.

In the City of Mahomet it is said Paradise was begun. But there are no cool groves, no bubbling fountains, no nightingales, no delicious fruits. There is a superfluity of lovely Houris, brimming over with sensual lust, and yet ever virgins. But that is just the con-

suming agony, that, notwithstanding all the heat of passion, they ever remain virgins.

In the Mormon City the Millennium has begun. Unchastity is the characteristic mark of its existence. They are devoured here by unchaste desires, as if they were vermin. They swarm, bite, and sting, and produce an incessant scratching and smarting. Among the Latter Day Saints, devotion and unchastity are one and the same thing. Only gynæological sermons are preached in the Mormon City. And Joseph Smith is a master preacher.

They are both of them distinguished gynæologists, and never appear in public without a large retinue of picked women accompanying them. They are for all the world like fowls strutting about among a flock of hens; or rather like game cocks. For they are set a-fighting with each other just like game cocks; duels are frequent among them, and the whole population on either side take part in them. Of course they do not use their fists, but only their tongues. The great aim is to see who can dish up the greatest lies. The Mahomedans, who compose the greatest number, maintain justly that their prophet is master; in reality he is far from being able to cope with Joseph Smith. But, strangely enough, they are not conscious themselves of falsehood,

but are convinced that they are speaking the sheer truth. This gives Mahomet an indescribable appearance of simplicity. He resembles to a tittle the camel driver from Mecca.

I did not visit these places ; I had proposed to go and see the most remarkable of all the cities in Hell—the City of Politicians, called also the City of Unrighteousness, and those towns lay far out of my route. Moreover, I was perfectly satisfied with what I had incidentally got to know of them. Cock-fighting, especially between blind cocks, has never been one of my passions.

I met a strange procession on the road. There was a carriage of the most remarkable description, in the middle of a crowd of persons wearing red caps, who partly dragged, partly pushed the machine along with wild yells. A man, dressed in the most elegant Parisian costume from the last century, was enthroned on a stage high above their heads. His daintily dressed and delicately powdered hair, white neckcloth, with its embroidered ends hanging down, his expensively worked velvet coat, and lace ruffles that fell over a pair of delicate hands as slender and white as a woman's, his silk pantaloons, stockings, and buckled shoes, altogether betokened a being of a refined and delicate nature. And yet this

man was one of the world's greatest butchers. The machine on which he was borne along triumphantly was a portable guillotine.

Do you know who he was from my description?

This delicate individual still thirsts ever after blood; but, throughout the whole of Hell, there is not a single drop to be found. His eyes are constantly directed to people's necks, and he thinks he is paying one a very great compliment by saying, "You have an extremely fine neck, sir, or madam, or miss," as the case may be. Followed by his executioners and admirers, he goes wherever there is a large concourse of people, as if there were something for him to do. But he is pushed aside amid jeers and scoffs, as an individual that has one fixed idea; but withal his madness is perfectly harmless. He is no longer an object of terror now, and he feels very, very unhappy over it. Yet he still has his partizans, sworn friends, who are quite agreed with him that it is a miserable state of things; and who every now and then, when he has found a good place for the guillotine, show him the politeness of allowing him to chop off their heads. Of course the process is not quite painless, but is no more accompanied by any danger than such things used to be at

Astley's or Price's Theatre. And yet it is a poor satisfaction after all, for not a single drop of blood flows from the wound.

It was a long journey I had undertaken. On my road I came to a town that resembled an immense monument. Darkly and silently it reared itself above a boundless, desert flat. Not a window, not a loophole showed any signs of life within; not a sound was to be heard, not a soul passed in or out of its gates. I went round it several times without meeting a living creature. At last I encountered a wandering soul, from whom I learnt that it was the City of the Inquisition. From him, too, I learnt that not long since a former powerful King of Spain had made his entrance into it with great pomp and a numerous retinue.

Should I, or should I not? Where His Catholic Majesty had gone in, I could enter too. Yes, I would go in.

On the gate I found a notice fastened up, the contents of which startled me not a little. They were as follows :

“Great *auto-da-fé* at which it has graciously pleased His Catholic Majesty, the glorious protector of the Holy Inquisition, to allow himself to be burned alive, after having first most graciously submitted to trial by torture *in extenso*. About six hundred heretics will, on

the present occasion, most respectfully wait upon His Majesty on the pyre, and will *pro formâ* accompany His Supreme Highness to Hell."

Rather an exciting piece of information! The poor Spanish monarch had come in good time, and a magnificent banquet was being held in honour of his visit. Should I, or not? I hesitated, but only for a moment. It was clear to me that within even the worst would be endurable; and then the invitation on the placard had something diabolically fascinating about it.

Yes, I must enter!

It was the second holy city I had visited. In a certain way these two cities stand side by side: for what the City of Destruction is to the land of the Jews, so is the City of the Inquisition to Christendom.

A shudder passes through one from head to foot on entering the walls of the city. The gate falls down of itself, with a subdued grating sound, that resembles an ominous signal of treachery. Even the stoutest conscience begins to quake. Gloomy and deserted, the city unfolds its narrow, crooked streets to view; it is as it were dead. The tall, dark houses have only a few barred windows, looking out into the streets. It is just as if horror dwelt within.

Here and there monkish forms steal along,

with their hats over their faces, in which are two eyelet holes; like corpses just come from the grave. Now and then, too, processions pass along the streets; either penitential processions, that present the most revolting spectacles of self-torture, or the still more mournful processions of thanksgiving, where the doomed persons are conducted with all pomp to the public place of torture or the pyre. The only thing that brings a little life into the town are the frequent *auto-da-fés*.

The city is only inhabited by individuals who have once been actively engaged in the service of the so-called Holy Inquisition; and yet admission is not denied to others; but it is only some few foolhardy people that have ventured within. I was one of them.

The City of the Inquisition is like a tomb that guards a terrible secret; and such in reality is the case. The terrible secret is this, whom will the unknown power of the Inquisition next seize, and submit to new experiments in the art of torture?

No one is safe; not even those persons who occupy the most exalted positions in this secret society, who have been patterns of zealous devotion in the service of Satanized Christendom. Even the very members of the secret court are not secure. Perhaps a person who has just condemned another

to the most excruciating tortures is the very next who is submitted to them himself. Secretly and swiftly the wretched beings are tracked to their lurking-places, and are dragged before the court. They are demanded to render an account of their faith, a thing they naturally are unable to do; no one in Hell can do it. So they are at once sentenced. But it is worth noticing that those who question the poor wretches, and who pass sentence over them, would be just as little able to render an account of their faith themselves. Thereupon the torture commences. Every invention of that sort, which the Holy Inquisition has discovered through the long ages of the past, is found collected here, and everything is tried in turn. Certainly they are spirits; but—oh, horror!—in imagination they suffer all the agonies which were connected with these tortures in the world! Once they raved against mankind in general; now it is against themselves reciprocally.

At last the stake usually follows. And though the flames do not burn, and though, if they did burn, the miserable wretches would be unable to feel them, yet in spirit, in imagination, they suffer all the agonies of one who is burnt to death.

Thus everything gives way to terror and nervous anxiety. One cannot be said to live

in this city, but rather to be in constant dread, to tremble with fear. My heart, too, was oppressed with nervous anxiety. It was of no use that I represented to myself that I must be quite safe, as I had never stood in any kind of connection whatsoever with this spiritual, political, and executive establishment in the world. But it was of no avail. I was obliged to do violence to my inclinations, in order to bring myself to remain.

The silence was frightful! And yet the city was on the point of displaying its most luxuriant life. Everything told that the hour of the great *auto-da-fé* was at hand. Masked forms swarmed from every house; it was only necessary to follow the stream to reach the scene of the festival. But when the thought of His Catholic Majesty, and the six hundred heretics on the burning faggots, forced its way into my soul, a suffocating fear came over me, which I could struggle against no longer. I left the feast to itself, and hurried back as if death, in the holy Hermandad's form, were sitting on my neck.

Fortunately, let me add, and contrary to all expectation, I slipped out of the city. The cold sweat stood out on my forehead; my knees trembled under me; and as soon as I found myself outside the walls of this fearful city, I sank to the ground in a state of insensibility.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

WHEN one will adduce some prodigy in the world, one is wont to speak of the Pyramids, the ruins of Babylon or of Nineveh, the Caucasian or Chinese wall. I have seen nothing of all this, but still dare venture to assert that it is a mere nothing when compared with the mass of buildings which the City of Politicians affords.

And yet it is for the most part but a single day's work, that is a day of Hell, reckoned from one death darkness to the other. I call it here a day ; but call it as you please, a month or a year, it is all the same. The city, in order to retain that appellation—which does, indeed, not quite harmonize with the general idea, as in the present case it is only a matter of one enormous building, one coherent, shapeless, and preposterous mass—the city is always being built, and is never completed. It attains the whole of its immense proportions during the period that elapses

from one darkness to another, and then collapses, from inability to sustain its own weight. At the next break of day it is commenced over again; but not quite from the very beginning; for the foundation work is given, a gigantic work in itself, surpassing all human conception. As regards its origin, one cannot obtain accurate information; but they do say, that it takes it from the Devil. But it is perfectly secure, it does not give so much as a hair's breadth. It is pierced in all directions by excavations and galleries, crossing and re-crossing each other, and these the work-people use as dwellings. I know of no better comparison for these excavations than the well-known Catacombs.

On this foundation the city is erected. A number of statesmen in Hell have taken on themselves the duty of building. Labourers are in abundance; they pour in by millions from all quarters of Hell, and bring their own materials with them. This makes me think, not of the Catacombs any longer, in which I thought just now I had hit upon such a striking comparison, but of a beehive. The instinct that assembles these countless souls in one common work, and sets them to the busiest employment, is similar to that observable among bees.

They bring their materials with them.

How often you may have heard these and similar expressions in the world,

“A stone lies on my heart,” “A load fell off from my heart then.”

Oh, my friend, these expressions are dangerous things, innocent though they seem. In the world it is only a form of expression with these stones, but here in Hell it is literal truth and reality. Every deceit, unrighteousness, merciless act, of which you were guilty, has become a stone upon your heart. Nobody is free from these stones on the heart. Oh, how they weigh! But of course there is a difference, a very great difference. Many have such heavy stones, and such a number of them, that it is quite appalling. Such a weight on one heart—it is a crushing idea. But, understand me aright, there is an opportunity of getting rid of all these stones here at the building of the City of Unrighteousness. Numberless souls pass their whole lives, if I may use the expression, in unloading stones from their hearts, and getting them laid in the walls. And there is not one single person that has not tried at least to get rid of a portion of these heart-stones. A desperate, fruitless attempt! Yet it must first be learnt by experience. But there are millions that are so overloaded with stones, and so full of anguish under their

weight, that no experience touches them. Instinct is the ruling power.

The architects, that is to say, the statesmen, deliver the corner-stone themselves. It is perfectly astounding to see what stones these people can roll from their hearts. Their proportions are fabulous. One now for the first time gains some idea of the tremendous treacheries, wickednesses, and infamies they have committed in the world. In real truth the world cannot produce greater infamies. Neither is there any one on whom so great an amount of responsibility rests as on these statesmen; greater even than on monarchs. For it is possible to be a prince without actually being a statesman, for one is a prince by birth; but it is impossible to be a statesman without undertaking a great portion of a prince's responsibility, and a statesman one only becomes of free choice. They knew well enough what they took upon themselves, and they have no excuse. These individuals held the welfare of millions in their hands; they ruled for happiness or for misery, for life and death, not at home only, but abroad. And what use have they made of this immense, this extensive authority? Wonderful beings, forsooth, are these statesmen! They seem to think that everything is permissible

in the interest of the state, or even only in the interests of the dynasty they serve ; or—and now even their foothold gives way—only in the service of an abstract policy. They practise politics merely for the sake of experiment, or for play. They believe themselves to be exalted above all laws of morality ; and, as it were, presuppose that God will judge them by themselves by a different law, a kind of convenience law. Unrighteousness, deceit, treachery, and violence, they look upon as duties either towards themselves or towards society, and pay no heed to the blood and wails of thousands during the discharge of these reputed duties.

Wonderful beings ! I repeat ; and a wonderful world that pays them homage, and shouts out its applause ! Here in Hell it has become quite patent that the greatest crimes that are committed in the world were done in the service of a so-called high policy, and that the greatest criminals are to be found among the be-titled agents of this policy.

What masses of stone these politicians can roll from them ! Neither do they neglect any opportunity of doing it ; but their peculiar work is that of an architect, of directing the employment of those millions of hands, which at every instant are delivering millions of stones.

But there is a great difficulty connected with it. For there are thousands of architects, each of whom builds according to his own method and device. No two of them are alike, not even those who build side by side. And some of them are separated by a space of ten or twenty miles.

The circumference of the city—bear in mind that it is one edifice—would on this computation amount to over two hundred miles. But you must not attach any weight to this statement, for it may be altogether wrong. On every little portion of this immense circumference is a politician or architect, who builds away briskly without troubling himself about his neighbour to the right or to the left of him, to say nothing of his more remote colleagues. Under these circumstances, there must naturally be immense difficulty, if not impossibility, in completing the state.

I say state after mature reflection, and not city. For they do not wish to build a city alone, but to found a state, a pattern state, of course an universal state. That is the first thing. When the state is completed, a king is to be chosen, that is the second. That is the reason why one sees so many kings without territory roaming about in the neighbourhood of the City of Unrighteousness.

They have use for a king, naturally all are aspirants to the crown. But the prospects are distant, and very doubtful withal, for only one can possess it. But they live in hopes, and keep in the neighbourhood, lacing themselves up as tight as possible in order to cut a respectable figure, and to attract attention to themselves. Yet this does not prevent them from casting one stone after another on the walls as they pass by, as often as they think they are not observed. Some of these are the largest that are to be found there, only surpassed in size by those of their *quondam* ministers.

Moreover, the statesmen are perfectly aware of the immense difficulty this building entails. Heaps of notes cross each other along the entire circuit of the wall, alternately of a flattering, convincing, and threatening nature. The regular diplomats occupy themselves in nothing else than in writing notes. Numberless embassies, too, pass backwards and forwards, sent out with the express purpose of over-reaching in one way or another, or, if possible, of corrupting the adverse party. But they never succeed; the embassies are as empty as the notes. So at length they have resort to the last resource, viz., of holding a congress in order to bring the matter to a satisfactory result. In the city itself there is

not a spot of neutral ground to be found, so they agree to hold their meeting on a little muddy island, lying in the black river that winds along under the very walls of the town. But to get over there, there is none other way than to swim for it. One might suppose that these high-born statesmen, ditto fine diplomats, would find it tough work to plunge into the slimy, stinking water, resembling congealed blood. But they do not mind it at all; on the contrary, it is just their element.

You remember that the black river has its source in the unrighteousness of the universe, its frauds and falsehoods. Merrily they roll in it; it is a real refreshment to them. They do not stick at anything, at any sacrifice whatsoever, in the service of the state; but, as I said, it is a real pleasure to them, so far, for instance, as there can be any talk of pleasure in Hell. They are quite merry, these noble, otherwise so demure, gentlemen, and cannot refrain from attacking, and give each other a good sousing on the way. Many a statesman celebrates his finest, his happiest triumph, in the black river.

It is a most remarkable sight to see them tumbling over each other, like a shoal of frolicsome porpoises. Sometimes they get entangled, as it were, in knots, so that one can

only see a confused mass of arms, legs, and heads. Then they step ashore, and at the same moment assume their modest, stately bearing. Once more they become the refined, reserved men of the world, as stiff as pokers, and with an eye at every finger's end. It is quite impossible to see which of them has had a ducking, and which has given one. Thereupon the congress commences.

With what astuteness, refinement, and craftiness, they encounter each other! On one point they are agreed, that there must be some plan if the work of the state is to succeed; and that if they persist in building after the old, crazy, unconnected method, the edifice will never be able to sustain itself, but will again collapse at some point of preposterousness. But this is the only point on which there is any degree of unity observable among them. They seat themselves in a circle to negotiate; numerous proposals are brought forward, but are rejected with scarcely any discussion at all. Mutual jealousy renders any understanding impossible.

At length a proposition is made, and is carried, that every one shall give a sketch of his plan. Great expectations are raised from this common product; but the result is as sad as it is ridiculous. When the concocted plan

is made known, it appears to be the most crazy rubbish. It is all confusion, and puts common sense to the blush; but no one will relinquish his individual rights, and so it cannot end in aught but nonsense. Balderdash and twaddle float in the air, and the congress works away in a perfect pestilential atmosphere.

It is of no avail that the most moving speeches are made about the beauty and exemplariness of a simple and honourable policy—about the infernal equilibrium, without which the direst revolutions and confusions are to be feared—about the necessity of all Hell, which none can resist with impunity—about humanity, and the demands of morality, which in our days should render every brutal invasion an impossibility—about the exalted degree of education which Hell has reached, and which apparently offers the most unfailing guarantee for a happy solution of the question—about principles which must be held even to the death, nay, even much farther—about sacred rights, which no one can infringe with impunity, and which entail even great sacrifices for the sake of duty, &c., &c.

In short, in no chamber, in no parliament in the world, are such great oratorical powers, such powers of garrulity, displayed as in this congress in Hell. But it is altogether in vain.

Every one sticks to his own opinion ; and there is nothing left than to declare the congress to be closed.

But before separating, they testify their heartfelt gratitude to each other for all the courtesy, assistance, and valuable information they have mutually derived in their most honourable assembly. They flow over with mutual compliments over the deep insight, the penetration that has been developed ; over the masterly way in which the proceedings have been conducted to so felicitous an issue !

Thereupon they separate in perfect friendship. But this is no reason against their giving one another as many duckings as possible on their return journey. The deeper into the mud the greater the triumph, the greater the honour.

And so they set indefatigably to work at their building again, though they are perfectly convinced that there is no sense in it. And time passes on. The splendour of Paradise is long since past ; the light begins sensibly to wane. But they build and build, and their hearts become ever lighter and lighter. It is natural ; they get rid of their stones by degrees. The city rears itself up in immense, shapeless masses, and in proportions that are perfectly fabulous, and contrary to all reason.

The higher they build, the more apparent does the absurdity become.

It may last for a time; but it cannot possibly hold together for long. At a certain point it must give way; and this takes place almost simultaneously with the utter darkness that is coming on. The end is evidently at hand. Already they have woven a wreath of the most beautiful diplomatic enactments, when the whole suddenly collapses. The crash sounds through Hell, and makes it vibrate again. Every stone in the immense building falls back once more on to its respective heart, and Hell re-echoes with despairing cries of woe and wailing.

Only the huge foundation remains, and on this sad relic the kings seat themselves, crushed down under the weight of their crowns and the misfortunes of their kingdoms; doubly miserable they sit there, like Marius on the ruins of Carthage. And it is night! Hell is hushed in silence, save only for the sighs of the kings!

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE light is on the wane. My thoughts incessantly revert to Lili; there I ever find something which bears at least some resemblance to peace.

How she struggled against her illness, as long as it was possible to struggle; how strong her tender, delicate constitution made itself, in order to tranquillize and comfort us!

At length she could get no ease. We only thought of embarking for Europe once more as soon as possible. But she expressed a wish to return to Bethlehem, and we could not but give way to it. And though this little journey was accomplished with all the care and caution possible, we felt very uneasy about the result. But Lili assured us that she was better, and only needed repose.

A great part of the day she passed under an awning on the little terrace above the convent wall. I used to sit there with her (I was scarcely ever away from her side), I

might say grieved to death. It was there that she told me her last tale, in order to show me how brave, how animated she felt. Yes, it was her last. It was not the exertion—her happy smile, sweet, soft, melodious voice testified against that—no, it was Death itself that was too strong for her.

“It was in the early dawn. Life was beginning to be visible through the night fogs that rested over the convents between Mount Olives and Jerusalem.

“The Apostle James, the Lord’s brother, surnamed the Good, was proceeding down the mountain. He had been spending the night on the mount in devotion and prayer, after the example of his Master. This spot was dear to him beyond all others, for the Lord had once fought his last severe fight there in prayer.

“The night was past, and he was now returning to his home. As he emerged from the olive grove, he paused a moment on the open slope above the valley. The sun was on the point of rising; the fog was slowly lifting, and dispersing before the morning breeze.

“Close by was the garden of Gethsemane; and the brook Cedron wound itself along in the cleft below. On the other side, Jerusalem reared itself up, with its mighty but decayed walls; far above these the temple towered in

glorious magnificence—that temple that should so soon be laid waste.

“Yet James hoped that he should not live to see the abomination of desolation which was to come. For he loved his city and his people. A happy feeling, which could not deceive him, told him that he would have fought his fight and won his crown before. Yes, it was a happy feeling; for he loved his Lord deeper than his city or his people; and to his thoughts it was the fullness of bliss to be for ever with Him.

“He was proceeding, then, on his way, when a woman met him. She was young and lovely, but the stamp of sorrow was impressed upon her brow. She was but seventeen years old! The fleet tears coursed down over her cheeks, and she wrung her hands in the deepest agony. As she approached she fell down at the Apostle’s feet, and besought him to have mercy upon her: ‘Her husband had just recovered from a violent fever, but was wasting away like a shadow. No physician could give them advice, and they were very poor. He would die, alas, die! And they loved each other dearly, so dearly!’

“The Apostle made no reply, but stood regarding her with a look that pierced to her very soul; he seemed as if he could read her soul, as it had been a book. He knew her. She

had often been present when he was preaching the Gospel. But faith had not yet been able to take root in her heart. She had too great a trust in the world still ; she loved herself still too much. It seemed to her too heavy a burden to renounce the world at so young an age, and heavier still to renounce herself.

“The old man regarded her for a long time in silence. She felt herself strangely ill at ease under his glance ; yes, she trembled under it. For though it seemed to be mild, there was a seriousness, an air of authority about it, which God alone can grant. At length the Apostle broke silence by asking :

“‘Woman, dost thou love him then so dearly?’

“‘Yes, father, I do love him,’ she answered, with a trembling voice.

“‘As dearly as thou dost thyself?’ he inquired further.

“‘Oh, far, far more!’ she exclaimed ; and could scarcely get the words forth for her sobs.

“‘Well, then, my daughter, there is one means by which you can preserve your husband for life. It is a difficult one ! but reflect, it is the only one. Go round the city from house to house, and beg for charitable gifts for your husband !’

“‘Alas, father ! money, I fear, can profit him no longer.’

“ ‘ You shall not beg for so much as a mite of money, but for a mite of time. All the days which good people will dispense with from their lives, shall, by God’s grace, be added to the sum of your husband’s days.’

“ The woman thought, ‘ There are many good persons; and persons in general value the days of their life at much less than they do their money. The last they cling to; while they squander away and do not know how to make an end of the first.’ She thanked the old man, and with a heart full of blessings went away consoled.

“ And she went around Jerusalem with humble, earnest requests, as she told the story of her dying husband, and about the man of God, who had commended her to the mercy of pious individuals.

“ ‘ May God bless you,’ she ended; ‘ if not for any longer, at least for a couple of days!’

“ But she met with but poor success. Some mocked her, and thought she must have lost her senses; others drove her from their doors with words of abuse; others thought it was a capital joke, but did not venture to take any part in it. In many places they believed her tale, but then there was not one who had even a single day to spare. The greater part excused themselves by saying that they were weakly,

and had not a long time to live; or they still had so much to do in the world; or they had a large family to provide for. Every day was precious to them. And, oddly enough, those very persons who wasted their time the most, were in general the most parsimonious. But at some places she had to put up with the bitterest, cruellest indignities."

Thus far she had come in her tale, when one of those fearful occurrences, of which I cannot think, even now, without shuddering, suddenly broke off the thread of the narrative, and the thread of life was broken at the same moment. Her strength was now totally gone. She could deceive us at least no longer. Life in her was but like a lamp that flickers and flares for one moment, and the next is suddenly extinguished.

Year after year ran by; yes, fifteen years had fled! I was young no longer. During this time Lili's broken-off story often came into my thoughts. One day, in a sorrowful mood, I happened to mention it to a friend, who expressed his lively regret that there was no continuation to this history.

Fifteen years! and these fifteen years had been made bad use of, in a manner unworthy of Lili's memory.

One day an old number of a popular maga-

zine fell in my way. Among the stories in it I was astounded to find one which had the title of "The Legend of the Begging Girl."

Yes! my presentiments had not deceived me, it really was the continuation of Lili's story. Certainly it was not exactly written as Lili would or could have told it. But its development was quite in accordance with Lili's spirit. No other termination could have been imagined.

Here, then, follows the conclusion :—

"First, she knocked at the door of a rich money changer and merchant. He had the best stall in the fore-court of the temple, and in confidential moments he would sometimes boast to his friends that he had even the governor himself under his thumb. And no one doubted that he spoke the truth. This first visit was not without hope. The old Rabbi bethought himself, after having listened to her complaint. He looked upon the matter as a kind of speculation. Perhaps the dying man had money, a great deal of money, and would pay a high price for what perhaps, rightly received, was not worth a denarius. 'How much would he give for one day, a month, a year?' Ah, hope had deceived her! Her sick husband had not much money.

"Farther on she met a Roman centurion.

Certainly there was little hope that a heathen should take compassion on her, a Jewess. But he looked so good; she would, at all events, make the attempt.

“The centurion understood her better than she had anticipated; for what faith did not, superstition did effect.

“‘My poor lass,’ he answered, stroking his bushy beard, ‘my life is so uncertain; in fact I scarcely know whether I possess one. Even by to-morrow it might be all over with me. So you see it would be very reckless in me to dispose of that which I do not possess. The gods forbid! Moreover it is contrary to the articles of war. My life, such as it is, is at the entire disposal of the emperor. By Hercules, I am very sorry for you! My poor child, do you require any money?’

“No, it was not money she needed. So they parted, and the centurion proceeded on his way with heavy steps, as his spurs jingled on the stones.

“Next she went to a large manufacturer. He was in the factory, where more than a hundred hands were busily employed. He was one of the ten lepers on whom the Lord had once taken compassion, and of whom only one had returned to give thanks. But he was not that one. By chance the woman addressed

him in the very same words which he once, in his misery, had addressed to the Son of God, 'Sir, have mercy on me!' But he did not have mercy. He pointed to the busy life in the factory and answered, 'Woman, see how the work goes on! And yet I cannot make the supply meet the demand. After this, then, can you for a moment suppose that I have any, even the very smallest portion of my short allotted span of life to dispose of? Woman, you must go elsewhere.'

"But the woman continued, 'Sir, for Rabbi Mirjam's sake, who once had compassion on you, have mercy now on poor wretched me!'

"The man started, turned scarlet, and then became very pale. Some time elapsed before he spoke.

"'You are a very unreasonable woman. You know that my life is much shorter than other people's. I only first began to live when I was cleansed of my leprosy, at a very advanced age. And yet you desire of me that I should shorten the number of my days for your sake! Go; you are hindering my people! I have already wasted more of my time upon you than I had intended or could afford.'

"On coming out into the street once more she found herself near the temple. But though the poor creature was so engrossed with her

sorrow, she did not forget to put her mite into the alms-box as she passed by. A little farther on she met a priest returning home after the service in the temple was over.

“‘Thou God of Abraham!’ exclaimed the priest, as he gathered up his long robe, the hem of which the poor woman appeared as if she would kiss. ‘Thou God of Abraham!’ he repeated with upraised hands after hearing the woman’s story. ‘Hearest thou this woman? Wherefore has she chosen me whereon to pour forth her filth? She must either be crazed, or some witch.’

“‘Sir, I am not crazed!’ was the lowly answer.

“‘Well, then, you must be a witch,’ he interrupted her, as he spat upon her. ‘Take care that you do not become amenable to the law, and be stoned to death!’

“The next place she tried was the house of an illustrious Syrian, of princely blood, who had come to Jerusalem to enjoy life. And he had enjoyed it in copious draughts, and was very near the lees. Idle as he was, he did not know how to pass away the time quickly enough. If the woman had known this, doubtless her hopes would have risen considerably.

“Admission was vouchsafed her without

difficulty. Through a court-yard, which resembled a little Paradise, where beautiful marble statues peeped out from among the dark foliage, where fountains rippled and birds were singing, and the loveliest flowers in the world were massed together to diffuse their rich perfume; through rooms which glittered with Tyrian purple, Roman mosaic work, marble, gold and ivory, where a domestic in gorgeous livery was stationed at every door she passed through, she was ushered into an apartment where the lord of the house was reclining after his bath. He lay dozing on a couch with his eyes half closed. An Abyssinian slave sat at his head; she was as dark as the night, and was fanning him with a fan made of peacock's feathers; while at his feet sat a Greek slave as fair and bright as day, gently stroking the soles of his feet with her soft palm. Both of them were lovely, each in her way; but the poor suppliant heeded them not. Still less did she think that she herself, with her clear olive complexion, mid-way between black and white, united the loveliness of day and night in her own person, and was even prettier than either of the two.

“ ‘Woman!’ answered the young man in a sleepy tone, ‘it is quite true that I do not set

a great value on my life ; my existence is but a miserable one. But why I should make you a present of that of which I have enough, or more than enough, I do not really know. I lay no claim to nobility of nature. I want something in return for what I give ; and what have you, pray, to give me ? Go to your own people, woman ! Let me remain what I am—a stranger to you !

“The poor woman was about to depart. But a sudden exclamation from the young man caused her to stay. At length he had opened his eyes, and beheld her ravishing beauty. ‘Wait a little !’ he exclaimed, as he rose up from the couch. ‘I have still something to say to you.’

“A bright idea had seized him. He needed excitement ; but means of excitement had become rare. But here was one close at hand.

“‘I said—something for something. The days of my life are at your service ; a few or many as you please ; but you must offer something corresponding. Let us play ! See here are dice. I risk a portion of my life, and you your virtue, or a part of your virtue, as you may please to call it. How much can your virtue be worth ? Only do not be too snappish, and too extravagant in your ideas ! Let us say six months of my life ! Is that too

little? Well, then—I am no miser—a full year then—two years if you like. By the temple I would not let you slip for a trifle!’ he continued, as he seized hold of her wrist. ‘I say three years! . . . That is a high price, and a high stake. . . . You will not? Fool, your husband need never know it! You have only to go and wash in Jordan, and your sin is washed off, and you are as pure and clean as ever. . . . You are in earnest then? You will not? . . . Then go to Gehenna!’

“Blushing with shame, and with the warm tears streaming down her face, the young woman left the Syrian’s house. It was long before she ventured to let any one else see her face.

“But it was a holy matter; she dared not give it up yet. So she came in God’s name to one of the rich men who lived every day in luxury and pleasure. Enjoyment was his life; without that there was nothing. Once he had followed a better course of living. From his youth up he had kept the commandments, and had placed his hopes on eternal life. It was that same young man who once had come to the Lord, and had said, ‘I have kept the commandments from my youth. Good Master, what lack I yet?’ And the Lord had answered, ‘If thou wilt

be perfect, go and sell all that thou hast, and give it to the poor. So shalt thou have treasure in Heaven; and come and follow me.' But when he heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

"From that hour the young man had given up all thoughts about eternal life. He had gone over to the Sadduces, who say that there is no life after death, and had become one of their sworn disciples. The poor woman, then, could not have come to a more unfortunate place. The rich man laughed at her, and said:

"'Fool! I have nothing save that same life, and you desire that I shall parcel it out to Crethi and Plethi. Know that every day of my life is valuable to me, and is not to be weighed with gold. You have come to the wrong street, my child. Turn round the corner and go to the Pharisees.'

"And to the Pharisees she went. She went to the house of one of the most esteemed lawyers, one of the great lights of Israel. Not only could he give an account of the Thora to the very minutest tittle; but caused it to appear in his own life in the most perfect manner. His righteousness was so resplendent that it lightened up even the darkest nooks wherever he came. His praise, there-

fore, was naturally in everybody's mouth. Neither could he be unknown to the young woman.

"The Pharisee saw that the woman was young and beautiful. He received her, therefore, in a way more than friendly, and seemed to lay her prayer to heart in a compassionate mood.

"'Poor child,' he said, turning his eyes round to the great edification of his clients and disciples, who were assembled in the ante-room. 'Poor child, I must hear thee further on this matter. Follow me into my private chamber.'

"There the Pharisee let the mask fall from him without further ceremony. Suddenly he assumed the appearance of those grim, stiff images of the Satyrs, which, according to the latest fashion, formed the doorpost to the magnificent gate through which she had passed into the house. Leering, he took the young wife's hand in his, and pressing it tenderly said :

"'Let us drop it, my lovely one. We are quite alone here. Let me enjoy thy youth and beauty whilst you enjoy them too. Your reward shall be great; great your happiness. It is quite clear that it is all over with your husband. Let him die, and be gathered to

his fathers. But you, my charmer, live for pleasure, together with me.

. . . “Hush! it is of no use for you to raise your voice. . . . There is none to hear you. . . . Shameless woman, you tempt me in vain! Dost not know that the people with one voice call me holy and righteous? Pack yourself off, lewd woman! And dost hear, keep your tongue in your mouth. Perhaps you would like to play the chaste Susannah’s part over again. But take care, do not make the attempt. Not even a Daniel could save you!’

“Trembling in every limb, and half fainting, she left the house of the righteous man.

“For two days she went thus about from house to house. Only every now and then she ran home to see after her sick husband, whom her poor neighbours tended by turns. But her anxious prayers had brought her nothing; nothing at all, saving only here and there hard and insulting words, and that which was still far worse.

“At last, the evening of the second day, she gave it up in despair. Overcome with fatigue and pain she sank down at the Damascus Gate. There the poor thing lay, brooding as it were over her misery. But suddenly her tears ceased flowing, a smile passed over her suffering features, as if it had been a sun-

beam. As if she knew nothing of weariness, she rises up and hastens to seek out the Apostle.

“‘Now, my daughter, what fortune hast thou met with?’ inquired the old man, with the tenderest compassion.

“‘O father! men have no compassion in them; the world is evil, and thinks only of itself, and of its carnal lusts.’

“‘True my child; compassion is to be found with God alone!’

“‘Yes, father, and thither will I flee. There is none who would give me as much as one single day, and there are many days belonging to a life; many days are needed to preserve my husband to me. I was nearly despairing. But then it suddenly occurred to me that I too had a life, a long life considering my youthfulness. Oh, thou man of God! cannot I then myself alone give in one what the multitude refused to give mite by mite? My husband is half my life. Let him then take my half! Thus we could live and die together. Or let him, if needs be, take it all! I would willingly die, if only he might live!’”

“Thus she spoke, as her tears fell fast and hot. But the Apostle laid his blessed hand on her head, and said with a voice of emotion:

“‘My daughter, be of good cheer! Thou

hast found grace before God. Go home! Thy husband will live, and thou shalt live with him!"

Such is the history! Do not expect me to tell you the impression it made on me! Enough to say that it was exactly as if Lili were speaking to me from the other world, and that I let my head fall down between my hands and wept bitterly, not so much for her as for myself.

One thing stood out clearly before me, and with this thought I received some comfort. Had these terms been proposed to me, I would joyfully have shared my life with Lili; yes, I feel certain I would unconditionally have given my life for her. So deeply had I loved her. But of what use was the story now to me? Only some tears, which no one could see: only some tears!

I end this letter by the last quickly disappearing gleam of light. I shudder, I shudder! A great portion of the horror which this death-darkness contains is due to the conception of the last day. When will it come? Who knows? But it will, it will come some time!

Damned! It is a terrible word. A perfect abyss of horror, misery, and wretchedness,

discloses itself in it. But am I then really lost, eternally lost? No, not yet, of that I feel certain. But, on the other hand, is there any possibility of salvation? To this question I have no answer. Both yea and nay are too much. At times it seems to me that there is a possibility. But it is merely a gleam; I cannot hold it fast, however painfully I exert myself. Sometimes when I have struggled and suffered the most severely, a wondrous peace comes into my soul, a marvellous consolation. In Hell truly no repentance can take place. But that which we suffer and experience in memory and reality! Oh! may it not perhaps make the soul ripe for repentance, so that the same moment it is released hence in order to stand before the judgment bar, it may flee away to the Saviour, and find mercy and peace, even on the very brink of condemnation?

Even if it were to be a thousand years, aye, tens of thousands of years, oh, what a powerful hope would it be! Ten thousand years in torments would be dirt cheap for such salvation at the very last moment.

Lili! Yes I know she loves me, and that with the Saviour's own love. If that wondrous power that love possesses is aught more than a fable, at least it forms one single link

between me and life. And I know, Lili, that this link will never give way to all eternity. But a link which cannot break, and yet which cannot bring about a reunion would be a non-entity.

And can Lili be perfectly happy without me? That is another question! Can she be perfectly happy and I be lost? Can God have the heart to allow her to lack that which was most precious to her in the world, and what, next to Him, is most precious to her still? I cannot conceive it!

So there is then a hope left, and this hope is attached to her. Not that she has power to save me, but because it was vouchsafed to her to lead me to the Saviour's feet. Perhaps some day it will be vouchsafed to her to make the sign of the cross over me, as I did over her in her death. Did she not say at her very last hour, "We shall meet again?" And with this assurance she died happy.

Can it be possible that God should have granted her a happy death, that was founded upon a falsehood, and based upon a disgraceful error? No, it is impossible! Therefore, the conclusion is . . . but I dare not, I dare not make it!

And yet a presentiment of the possibility of redemption and salvation before the final

word is spoken, and everything is over, prevails in Hell. Here hope again peers forth, and though it be so weak and so misty, still it is a mighty hope.

Could God suffer that such a hope should gleam through the wretched souls of countless millions if it were merely a miserable illusion? No; impossible again! The Lord is a righteous God. We only suffer that which we have deserved. But just as certain is it that God is merciful. No deception can take place!

But stay, might not the deception be a part of that very punishment; might it not, like everything else, be a natural consequence of the life we have led in the world?

Oh, miserable man that I am! Where is my hope which so lately lighted up my soul? . . .

It is again total, total darkness!

CHAPTER XXXV.

. . . . Now it is breaking ! . . . Nay, do not be disturbed . . . it is but empty talk ; it is not breaking !

In Hell there is nothing that breaks. I daresay you think at once about hearts. But here in Hell they are able to endure any amount of wretchedness, destitution, and suffering.

No, it is not so easy for anything to break here ! I say anything, and mean by that, if not the heart, something else at least. I buoy myself up at least with the hope that it will turn out good in the end ; worse it is impossible to be. But here everything holds desperately together ; it is antecedent and consequence, cause and effect, all in one. If ever it were necessary to give Hell another name, it might well be termed the world of consequences.

You can well understand that no one could

write the above except with teeth firmly set with maddening pain. You would be horrified to see me ; me, whom you still, perhaps, call your good old friend. I say, God preserve you from it ! But I perceive that I must collect myself. It was not to pour my howls into your ears that I took up my pen ; but simply to conclude my letter so that at length it might get sent off. It will be a long, long time, perhaps, before you hear from me again. Truly you are my friend ; but you will not be offended, if when it comes so far with me that I give up everything, I give up you too.

The above lines are written by the last glimmer of the fading light. How I shuddered at the approach of the long, long night. For each time the night of death returns, our horror becomes more terrible. When darkness falls, Hell is, as it were, razed to the ground. Those thousand different objects with which the power of imagination has tenanted it, in similarity to the world,—castles, villas, promenades, cities, theatres, churches, clubs, inns, &c. &c., in fine, everything that belongs to the comforts or pleasures of life in the world, exists no longer. Every trace of habitableness vanishes away ; and Hell resembles a huge, pitchy dark cellar, whose tenants, few or many,

man or woman, select or riff-raff, have to accommodate themselves and crawl together as best they may. While the light prevails, by the power of imagination one can adapt oneself at pleasure. There is no need to use any self-denial. Certainly, the pleasure one derives is awfully meagre ; it is but a shadow. But still it gives one occupation, though in a manner extremely painful, and in a certain sense serves to sustain the animal powers. In the day, for instance, I can, without much difficulty, delude myself into the belief that I am living in my comfortable house in —— Street ; and that I am lying in my warm, cosy bed, waiting for the servant to bring me my cup of coffee or chocolate. But at night I cannot do this. Naked, poor, utterly miserable, without a house, without a place of refuge, in other words, the prey of a terrible reality, I crouch tremblingly in the darkness, neither knowing nor caring with whom I am in company. There is no longer any talk of place or society ; everything is dissolved in a liquid gloom. I only know and feel that I am in Hell, in the company of the damned.

And then evil thoughts stream into my heart, and encamp round about it, as they did round the ill-fated Jerusalem of old. And the

abomination of desolation is there, distress and wretchedness, of which the world has never known an equal.

There, then, I sat that long, fearful night, with teeth gnashing, and a fire burning within. In the world one often hears speak of obstinacy in a combat. Ah! even the most obstinate struggle would be bliss, indeed, compared to my condition! For here in Hell there is no more any such thing as a struggle. Plenty of madness, plenty of self-devouring, but no struggle. One is a victim—a miserable victim, abandoned by earth and Heaven. Every little demon has full liberty to fix his claws into you, and to tear and flay you as it pleases. Understand me; I am speaking figuratively. For there are no small demons in Hell saving our own evil thoughts, remorse, lusts, and passions. On the other hand, there is a great Devil; but God be thanked, he has no power over our souls yet.

This night he held his wonted review in Hell. He does not always use the night for this purpose; though he prefers it. In itself the death-night is an abyss of horrors. But it can be worse; there is an abyss below the abyss, a horror above all horrors. Suddenly it comes on, and causes the whole of Hell to

stiffen. The millions of wretched souls are, as it were, moulded into one, in dismay and horror unmentionable. For they know that there is one among them who knows no mercy, and who devours himself till the time comes when he can devour them alive. He is amongst them; but no one knows where; and that is just the most terrible thing. It sparkles through the gloom, just as when one strokes the coat of a black cat the wrong way; long threads of fire pierce the darkness in all direction. It is the path along which he is proceeding; but where is he, where? His glowing eyes, perhaps, are glaring on the wretched being who is well-nigh fainting as he ventures to ask this question.

Oh, let me be dumb! or at least pass over these horrors quickly! Enough when I say that twenty times this night I thought I could feel myself in the claws of the Evil One. I will wrench from myself an instance.

On one occasion it seemed to me as if my inside was a fathomless pool, and that the fish within it were my sins. And the Devil amused himself by fishing there. Now one, now another lust or folly he placed upon his hook with a leer, and threw his line into the depth of my heart. And fine sport he had;

one fish—that is to say, one sin—after another he drew up with a derisive laugh. At last the hook lay hold of my heart. . . . Oh! it was fearful! Ask no more of me!

It was, of course, only a fancy, at least only a pastime, the Evil One was driving with me. But for all that, while there is nothing more real than death, I suffered death a hundred times in these fancies, in this sport.

At last—I know not how long a time intervened—Hell once more relapsed into its normal state of misery. Again it drew breath, as if after a long and horrible nightmare.

Can you imagine that it was a real relief to feel myself once more in the power of the small demons. There was, I am almost tempted to say, something quite comfortable in it. It is always a great thing to be oneself, be the conditions what they may. The whole of my life unrolled itself before me. One remorse after another came forward, and hooked itself firmly on to my heart. At last it was a mass of wounds.

But with remorse a longing so deep, so painful, united itself, as I have never felt before. It was not the world I longed after. The world, with all its pleasures, was a dead thing to me. No, it was after a living soul

I longed, after one of those whose love I had once possessed; Lili, my aunt, my father, separated from them for all eternity, a yawning, impassable abyss fixed between them and me. But my mother was still left, my precious mother; between her and me there was only death, and there is truth in the saying, "Love is stronger than death!" And my mother stood nearest of all to me. She must then be the best of all. What in the whole world can be compared to a mother? Languishing I turned with all the longing of my heart towards her.

And here, too, remorse came in, and appeared in exact proportion to my longing. How poorly had I repaid her tender love! I had been her all; but how little, in truth, had she been to me. Frequently I had been very near misconstruing her. Not unfrequently had the foul thought entwined itself around me that she was at bottom of a cold, selfish nature, who thought more of form and decorum than of substance, and who, in all things, had her own self in mind, to whom a life of Christianity had merely been a matter of outside form, and who, in matters of faith and love, had thought less of offering up herself and the world as a sacrifice, than of bringing sacrifice after

sacrifice to herself and to the world. What insane ingratitude! How bitterly I repented it now; how deeply I reproached myself for it! Oh! it is true, she had been the best, the tenderest of mothers, a mirror of perfection to women in general. In the painful emotion of these moments I felt weaker and softer than ever I had done before. "Mother, mother!" my heart sighed within me like a little child. Yes, mock me, if you can find in your heart to do so, my heart clung to her as a tender infant that longs for its mother's breast.

It was the first time I felt a burning wish to return to earth. Its invisible, iron bands, took stronger and stronger hold of me. The ghost nature, which hitherto had lain dormant within me, began to make itself apparent, while, in my agony, I heeded only one thing, "Mother, mother!"

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Dawn at last set in. The first object my eyes fell on, as soon as I could discern anything, was a crouching form, that sat with its back towards me, a little distance off. A strange and anxious presentiment came over me at the sight. My breast heaved. Had I

had a heart like yours, I should have heard it beat.

All at once the form turned towards me. . . God in Heaven! . . . That face, pale as a corpse, horribly contracted, . . . it was my mother's!

Horried, I rushed away in flight. I could not, I would not believe my eyes.

But, oh, my friend, believe it, or believe it not, it was my mother still!

My poor mother! It was the heart-blow, it was the filling up of the measure, if such a thing could exist in Hell.

What more shall I say? The language of despair, the only one I can speak, would but grate harshly on your ear, it would not reach your heart. Ah! if we could only, wretched beings that we both are, have the consolation of weeping together, of pouring forth our sobs and wails in company, of exchanging sorrows and pains in an intimate, lively affection!

But it is not granted us!

We know naught of tears; and words wherewith to lament over each other have, as yet, at least, never been found. And no wonder love itself seems to have died out for ever. We sit long, livelong hours, together, an inseparable pair.

Call it company if you will, but it is a company more barren and waste than any desert. No tiny shoot of life buds forth between us. We have nothing to say to each other. We are afraid to look upon each other. It is all cold, all dead, between us. But each of us glows with heat; but that glow with which we could warm each other seems to be quenched for ever.

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

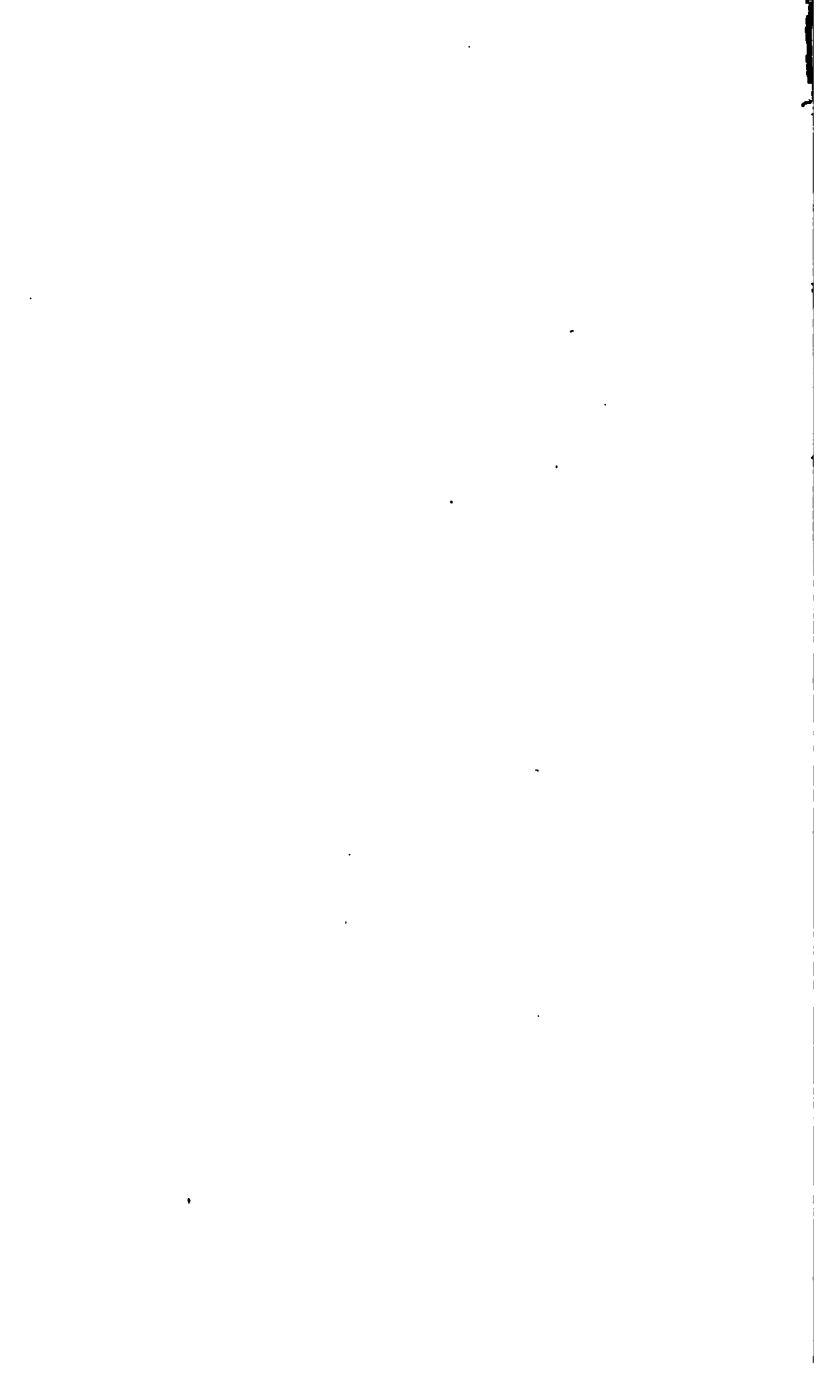
Rom. viii. 1.

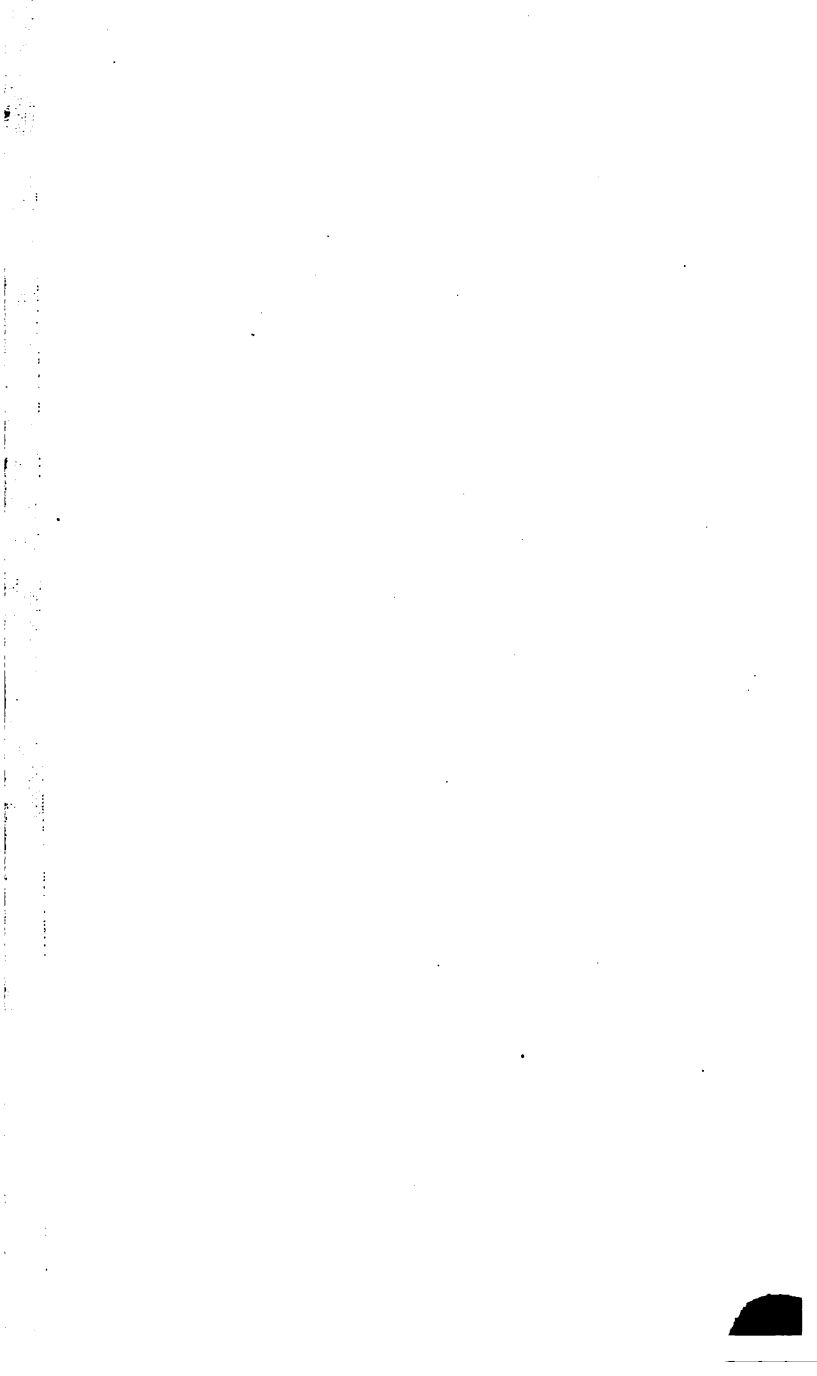
“If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”

Rom. x. 9.

AMEN !

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